

**THE EFFECTS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING WITH AN
EMPHASIS ON REFLECTIVE WRITING ON DEEP-LEVEL
PROCESSING OF AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP STUDENTS**

A Dissertation

by

COPIE DENISE MOORE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2008

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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ABSTRACT

The Effects of Experiential Learning with an Emphasis on Reflective Writing on Deep-Level Processing of Agricultural Leadership Students. (December 2008)

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Colleges and universities throughout this great land are charged with the awesome responsibility of developing our youth into becoming productive, contributing citizens. More specifically, within these colleges and universities, instructors are instrumental in the development of students. Experiential learning, and, more importantly, reflective writing are important components of college instructors' repertoires. Learning is not complete without proper reflection. The purpose of this study was to examine upper-level undergraduate students' perceptions of learning in an agricultural leadership course that emphasized experiential learning methods. Specifically, this study examined student attitudes regarding experiential learning and if students used a surface or deep approach to learning.

The respondents to the study included the students enrolled in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*. This study employed procedures associated with mixed methods research. Within the quantitative portion of this study, the students were required to complete the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire pre-

intervention and post-intervention. The intervention consisted of teaching strategies associated with experiential learning with an emphasis on reflective writing. Based upon the students' self-reported answers, it was determined that post-intervention scores for the Deep Approach Scale and the Surface Approach Scale were statistically similar to the students' pre-intervention scores. Teaching strategies associated with experiential learning with an emphasis on reflective writing did not have an influence on the way the students approached learning.

Within the qualitative portion of the study and as a course requirement, the students were asked to keep a reflective journal. Upon completion of the course, the students were asked to prepare a reflective paper, which served as a comprehensive reflection of the course. Three themes emerged from the students' reflective journals and papers—the students' perceptions of experiential learning, the indicators of a deep approach to learning, and how learning was maximized. In conclusion, the students benefited greatly from receiving instruction associated with experiential learning, and the students did foster a deep approach to learning, regardless of their answers to the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire. Reflection completed the learning process for the students enrolled in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*.

DEDICATION

To my daughter

May you always remember the importance of education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Boyd, and my committee members, Dr. Dooley, Dr. Boleman, and Dr. Bonner, for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research. I have always been of the belief that two heads are better than one, and for my research, five heads were definitely better than my own. Their advice and expertise have guided me throughout the course of this research.

I would also like to thank all the faculty and staff in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication at Texas A&M University for their friendship and for allowing my time here to be a rewarding experience. Thanks also goes to the students of ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* for serving as the participants of this study. Their enthusiasm and hard work was more than I could have ever hoped for or imagined.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my family. First of all, I would like to thank my wonderful husband and loving daughter. Jeff, your patience and love is something words cannot describe. I will always remember your support and the sacrifices you made for me to fulfill my dream. Sadie, the day you were born was the best day of my life. You gave me hope, but most importantly, you complete me. Lastly, I want to thank my parents, who instilled in me the importance of education and who have always encouraged me to fly high and dream big. Dad and Mom, this one is for you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF TABLES	xi
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Problem Statement	1
Theoretical Framework	3
Purpose of the Study	11
Importance of the Study	11
Limitations	12
Basic Assumptions	12
Definitions of the Terms	13
 II REVIEW OF LITERATURE	15
Purpose of the Study	15
Leadership Education	15
Experiential Learning	17
Reflective Writing	19
Student Approaches to Learning	21
Conceptions of Learning	23
Approaches to Teaching	24
How Students Learn	27
Reflection and Student Approaches to Learning (SAL)	32

CHAPTER	Page
III METHODOLOGY	35
Purpose of the Study	35
Sample	35
Methods	37
IV FINDINGS	45
Purpose of the Study	45
Context of the Study	45
Findings Related to Question 1	48
Findings Related to Question's 2, 3, and 4	61
IV CONCLUSIONS	87
Summary	87
Findings and Conclusions	95
Recommendations	103
Recommendations for Practice	106
REFERENCES	108
APPENDIX A	119
APPENDIX B	120
APPENDIX C	125
APPENDIX D	130
APPENDIX E	140
APPENDIX F	142
APPENDIX G	144
APPENDIX H	145
APPENDIX I	148
APPENDIX J	150

	Page
APPENDIX K	162
VITA	164

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		Page
1	Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle.....	5
2	Approaches to Teaching Used by Physical Science Teachers in Australia, N=24	25
3	Teaching Strategies that Supported the Experiential Learning Cycle.....	63

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Demographic Variables of the Students Enrolled in ALED 340: <i>Professional Leadership Development</i> at Texas A&M University, N=66.	46
2	Dependent <i>t</i> Tests for the Deep Approach Scale & the Surface Approach Scale, N=66	49
3	Descriptive Statistics for Gender x Deep Approach Scale, N=66.....	50
4	Analysis of Variance for Gender x Deep Approach Scale, N=66.....	51
5	Descriptive Statistics for Gender x Surface Approach Scale, N=66.....	52
6	Analysis of Variance for Gender x Surface Approach Scale, N=66.....	53
7	Descriptive Statistics for Age x Deep Approach Scale, N=66.....	54
8	Analysis of Variance for Age x Deep Approach Scale, N=66.....	55
9	Descriptive Statistics for Age x Surface Approach Scale, N=66.....	56
10	Analysis of Variance for Age x Surface Approach Scale, N=66.....	57
11	Descriptive Statistics for Major x Deep Approach Scale, N=66.....	58
12	Analysis of Variance for Major x Deep Approach Scale, N=66.....	59
13	Descriptive Statistics for Major x Surface Approach Scale, N=66.....	60
14	Analysis of Variance for Major x Surface Approach Scale, N=66.....	61

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

“Successful journeys...require good company” (Baxter-Magolda, 2002, p. 2).

Teachers of higher education must provide good company to their students. Sometimes, a teacher is required to guide students through their college journey. Other times, a teacher is a friend, and still other times, a teacher is an authority figure. Whatever role the teacher plays, it is essential for the teacher to know and understand his or her students and provide good company to his or her students along life’s journey.

Likewise, institutions of higher learning, and more importantly, the teachers within these institutions, have a responsibility of developing classroom activities that will develop the minds and bodies of their students. Chickering and Reisser (1993) believe:

The quality of teaching is critical to student development in college. Good teaching can powerfully encourage the development of intellectual and interpersonal competence, identity, mature interpersonal relationships, purpose, and integrity. Poor teaching can actually hinder development in one or more of these areas. (pp. 369-370)

This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Agricultural Education*.

College teachers are challenged to become more than subject-matter experts. College teachers should become experts in teaching. Even though “the dark secret of higher education is that most college professors are never trained to be teachers” (National Panel Report, 2002, p. 16), college professors must embrace training, where they strive for excellence in teaching. Teachers must know and understand how and why students learn.

The traditional teacher-centered atmosphere of the college classroom has been criticized for not fostering a student’s ability to think (Trigwell, Prosser, & Waterhouse, 1999). In the traditional teacher-centered college classroom, students are empty glasses, and it is the teacher’s responsibility to fill the glasses with the knowledge the teacher feels is important for the students to learn. The teacher is pivotal in imparting new knowledge or skills to the students or filling their glasses (Marshak, 1983). The learner’s role is submissive, where he or she is only a participant in the learning process. This scenario is an example of a typical teacher-centered college classroom. Now, imagine a classroom where the teacher involves the student in the entire learning process, from the decision of what will be learned to the evaluation of what was learned—from the beginning to the end (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). This scenario is an example of a typical learner-centered college classroom. A learner-centered approach to teaching fosters a deep approach to learning, where students are required to think critically (Trigwell, Prosser, & Waterhouse, 1999). The way a college instructor teaches influences how his or her students learn (Trigwell et al., 1999).

Chickering and Reisser (1993) believe “learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much by just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, [and] apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves” (pp. 374-375). Do college instructors want their students to remember the information that was presented in the classroom today and forget it tomorrow? Or, what if the students remembered the information that was presented in the classroom for life? Hopefully, through the incorporation of learner-centered teaching practices with an emphasis on reflective writing, students will internalize the concepts presented in the classroom. Thus, the students will make the concepts their own and learn them for life.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework serving as a basis for this study consisted of three components. The first component was experiential learning. Experiential learning, as defined by Luckmann (1996), is “a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experience” (p. 7), and experiential learning is an active component in the repertoires of many college instructors. The best-known father of experiential learning, and the first to place the experience in learning, was Dewey (Roberts, 2006). Dewey (1938) philosophized “everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had” (p. 27). True learning is the result of students’ experiences, and the evaluation and reflection of these experiences. New thoughts and ideas are

formed as a result of the reflection of these experiences, thus building new concepts based upon past experiences (Arnold, Warner, & Osborne, 2006).

Another significant thinker and contributor to experiential learning is Kolb. Kolb's experiential learning theory defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). In Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (see Figure 1), the learner utilizes two strategies for grasping experiences—Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and the learner utilizes two strategies for transforming experiences—Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE) (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2000). Essentially, the learner involves himself or herself in a personal experience, which serves as the basis for observations and reflections (experience). The learner actively reflects upon the experience to determine its true meaning (observation), and he or she formulates the observations and reflections into a theory or concept (conceptualization). Active experimentation allows the learner to test the theory, thus leading to new experiences. The Experiential Learning Cycle begins anew (Svinicki & Dixon, 1987).

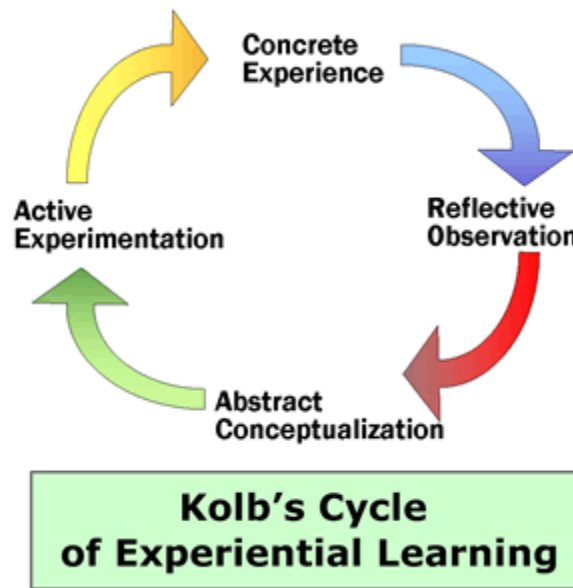


Figure 1.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

The second component of the theoretical framework that served as a basis for this study was reflection, and more importantly, critical reflection as a component of transformative learning. Reflection, or reflective thought, as defined by Dewey (1910), is the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 6). A valuable experience is without meaning unless the experience is carefully considered. Reflection is key. It allows students to make the connection between theory and practice and allows the principles learned in the classroom to be applied to their daily lives. Student learning is deepened and strengthened when the abstract becomes the concrete (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). Reflection can provide a

gateway to the students' outside lives, where the concepts come alive in the most usual of places for them. For a student to actually think, he or she is mentally engaged and ready to learn.

Reflective learning, as defined by Boyd and Fales (1983), is "the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective" (p. 100). Reflection is essential to learning from experience, and it is the "core difference between whether a person repeats the same experience several times, becoming highly proficient at one behavior, or learns from experience in such a way that he or she is cognitively or affectively changed" (Boyd & Fales, 1983, p. 100). Reflection helps the individual travel from a destination of uncertainty to a field of clarity (Dewey, 1910). The role of reflection, as defined in the context of learning, serves as a "bridge between experience and theory" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999, p. 180). Through reflective learning, student learning is deepened and strengthened (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999).

More importantly, it is paramount in adult education to develop the learners' ability to critically reflect, where learners understand the meaning of their experiences (Mezirow, 1981). Critical reflection is not concerned with the how, but with the why or, more specifically, the "awareness of why we attach the meanings we do to reality" (Mezirow, 1981, p. 11). Critical reflection is an essential component of transformative learning for adults (Mezirow, 1998). Transformative learning is the "process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent

understanding, appreciation, and action” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). Transformative learning involves “learning how we are caught in our own history and reliving it” (Mezirow, 1978, p. 101). Transformative learning helps adult learners develop autonomous thinking (Mezirow, 1997). Below is an example of transformative learning:

A housewife goes to secretarial school in the evening and finds to her amazement that the other women do not have to rush home to cook dinner for their husbands as she does. Perspective transformations may occur through an accretion of such transformed meaning schemes. As a result of the transformation of several specific meaning schemes connected with her role as the traditional housewife, she comes to question her own identity as predicated upon previously assumed sex stereotypes. (Mezirow, 1990, p. 13)

Learners’ experiences may be transformed through the critical reflection of those experiences.

In Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, he separates non-reflective action from reflective action. He identified three types of non-reflective action: habitual action, thoughtful action (understanding), and introspection (reflection) (Mezirow, 1991). Habitual action is “that which has been learnt before and through frequent use becomes an activity that is performed automatically or with little conscious thought. Common examples are using a keyboard or riding a bicycle” (Kember et al., 2000, p. 383). Typically, habitual action will not be seen in students’ reflections because habitual action happens with little thought from the students. The second type of non-reflective action is thoughtful action or understanding. Thoughtful action or understanding involves students using “higher-order cognitive processes to guide [them] as [they] analyze, perform, discuss, and judge” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 106). Typically, “much of the ‘book learning’ which takes place in universities is best classified as thoughtful action”

(Kember et al., 2000, p. 384). Thirdly, introspection or reflection “refers to thinking about ourselves, our thoughts or feelings...Introspection does not require validity testing of prior learning and hence is also non-reflective” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 106).

Introspection or reflection is what is normally considered as reflective thinking or reflective thought (Kember et al., 2000).

Separated from non-reflective action is reflective action. The only type of reflective action is critical reflection, or the change in one’s beliefs (Mezirow, 1998). Formally, critical reflection is defined as the “assessment of the validity of the prepositions of one’s meaning perspectives, and examination of their sources and consequences” (Mezirow, 1990). Introspection or reflection differs from critical reflection, in that, “reflection enables us to correct distortions in our beliefs and errors in problem solving. Critical reflection involves a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs are built” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). Critical reflection is not concerned with the how, but more concerned with the why. Ultimately, critical reflection is a higher level of reflective thinking and more profound level of reflection (Kember et al., 2000).

The last and final component of the theoretical framework that served as a basis for this study was the concept of student approaches to learning (SAL). In the pivotal, groundbreaking work of Marton and Saljo (1976a & 1976b), the idea of how students approach learning was introduced. In this research study, Swedish students were asked to read a selected passage. The students were then asked specific questions regarding the passage, and more importantly, the students were asked how they went about reading the selected passage. Lastly, the students were given a series of questions that analyzed their

depth of understanding about the passage (Marton & Saljo, 1976a). From the data collected, it was concluded that different students set about learning in different ways. From the students' interviews, two distinctly different levels of processing, or the ways the students set about learning, were identified: deep-level processing and surface-level processing (Marton & Saljo, 1976a).

Students who take a deep approach to learning are interested in understanding the meaning of what is being taught. They “personalize the task, making it meaningful to [their] own experience[s] and to the real world” (Biggs, 1987a, p. 15). The students' words provided meaning to deep-level processing, with their comments illustrating their approach to learning. One student said, “...I tried to look for...you know, the principal idea...”. The student further commented, “What was the point of the article, you know” (Marton & Saljo, 1976a, p. 9). The students who took a deep approach to learning concentrated “on what [was] signified” (Marton & Saljo, 1976a, p. 7). The most important element in the characterization of a deep approach to learning is the aspect of the students' search for understanding. The students do not just learn the facts, but they also learn the meaning of the facts. The students who take a deep approach to learning are able to apply what they learned in classroom to their daily lives, and this is illustrated by one student's words, “...then to learn...implies being able to make use of what you know” (Saljo, 1979a, p. 449).

Real learning or understanding is compared with rote learning or students who take a surface approach to learning. Students who take a surface approach to learning are focused on “learning the text itself, i. e., [they] have a ‘reproductive’ conception of

learning which means that [they] are more or less forced to keep to a rote-learning strategy” (Marton & Saljo, 1976a, p. 7). Some students, who approach learning with the idea of learning the information for the test and only for the test, see the task as a “demand to be met, a necessary imposition if some other goal is to be reached” (Biggs, 1987a, p. 15). The following student’s words characterized a surface approach to learning. “Well, I just concentrated on trying to remember as much as possible. I remembered...but, I’d sort of memorized everything I’d read...no, not everything, but more or less” (Marton & Saljo, 1976a, p. 9). The students who take a surface approach to learning are not aiming to remember the information presented in the classroom for life, but they are, rather, aiming at remembering the information for the test, and for the test only.

Ramsden (1981) introduced a third approach to learning, the achieving approach. In this approach, a student will typically vary his or her approach to learning (deep and surface) in order to receive a top grade in the subject he or she is studying. The focus of the students who utilize this approach is “recognition gained from top performance” (Biggs, 1993, p. 7). For one course, where the course content and the course requirements demand rote learning, the students will utilize a surface approach to learning. For another course, where the course content and the course requirements demand that the students understand the material, the students will utilize a deep approach to learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine upper-level undergraduate students' perceptions of learning in an agricultural leadership course that emphasized experiential learning methods. Specifically, this study examined student attitudes regarding experiential learning and if students used a surface or deep approach to learning.

More specifically, the researcher investigated the following research questions:

Question 1: As a result of a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning, were the students utilizing a deep approach or surface approach to learning?

Question 2: What were the students' perceptions of experiential learning?

Question 3: What were the indicators of a deep approach to learning as evidenced by the students' reflective writing?

Question 4: How was learning maximized through a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning?

Importance of the Study

By having a systematic and persistent understanding of how a student-centered leadership education course with an emphasis on experiential learning affects student approaches to learning, college instructors can become aware of the positive effects of experiential learning when used in a college agricultural leadership education course. Research has shown that college agricultural professors typically do not teach with the thought of promoting critical thinking in their students (Cano & Martinez, 1991; Whittington, 1995), and the way a college instructor teaches influences how his or her

students learn (Trigwell et al., 1999). If college agricultural professors are not teaching with the thought of promoting critical thinking in their students, the students are not typically thinking critically (Cano & Martinez, 1991; Whittington, 1995). College instructors have been accused of not encouraging students to think, where the students are only vessels needing to be filled with the knowledge and facts deemed necessary by the instructor. Whereas, reflective writing encourages students to think, making the student more than a vessel needing to be filled. The student is an individual thinker, whose thoughts and ideas are important to the class and the material being taught in the class.

Limitations

The results, and hence the implications, of this study had the following limitation. The limitation was as follows:

1. The sample used in this study was a purposeful sample and is based upon the students' enrollment in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*, Section's 901 and 902, during the Summer I Session of 2008. Because the sample was not a random sample, the results of the study cannot be generalized to a broader population.

Basic Assumptions

Some basic assumptions surrounded the study. First, it was assumed the students involved in the study accurately and honestly completed the questionnaire. Second, it was assumed the students involved in the study were an accurate representation of the

students in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications at Texas A&M University.

Definitions of the Terms

Several key terms were instrumental in the understanding of the study. They were as follows:

Critical Reflection: Critical reflection is when learners understand the meaning of their experiences, raising “awareness of why [they] attach the meanings [they] do to reality” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 11).

Experiential Learning: Experiential learning is defined as “a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experience” (Luckmann, 1996, p. 7).

Experiential Learning Cycle: Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle consists of four dimensions: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. These four dimensions are essential for the learner to gain knowledge, and ultimately, learn from experience (Kolb, 1984). Essentially, the learner involves himself or herself in a personal experience, which serves as the basis for observations and reflections (experience). The learner actively reflects upon the experience to determine its true meaning (observation), and he or she formulates the observations and reflections into a theory or concept (conceptualization). Active experimentation allows the learner to test the theory, thus leading to new experiences (Kolb, 1984).

Reflection: Reflection, or reflective thought, as defined by Dewey (1910), is the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 6).

Students Approaches to Learning (SAL): Students approach learning in two distinctly different ways (Marton & Saljo, 1976a). Students either approach learning deeply, where they are interested in understanding the meaning of what is being taught, or they approach learning in a surface manner, where they only learn the material presented in the classroom for the test (Marton & Saljo, 1976a).

Transformative Learning: Transformative learning is the “process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of learning in an agricultural leadership course that emphasized experiential learning methods. Specifically, this study examined student attitudes regarding experiential learning and if students used a surface or deep approach to learning.

More specifically, the researcher investigated the following research questions:

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Question 2: What were the students' perceptions of experiential learning?

Question 3: What were the indicators of a deep approach to learning as evidenced by the students' reflective writing?

Question 4: How was learning maximized through a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning?

Leadership Education

Leadership may be defined a multitude of ways, meaning something different to each and every individual. Leadership invokes different feelings within these same individuals. For the purpose of this study, Northouse's definition was used. Northouse (2007) defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). The four keywords within this definition

are process, influence, group, and goal. Leadership requires these common elements to exist.

Love and Yoder (1989) believe students perceive themselves as good leaders without obtaining the help from colleges and universities to develop themselves into better leaders. Leadership curricula are needed at the collegiate level to prepare students for their professional lives (Schumacher & Swan, 1993) and to help the students see how institutions of higher learning are helping to shape and mold them into becoming better leaders. Leadership programs have become prevalent within agricultural educational departments (Brown & Fritz, 1994; Fritz & Brown, 1998), helping students to develop the necessary teamwork and leadership skills to succeed in the world outside of higher education (Graham, 2001). The goals and aims of leadership education are discussed by Morrill and Roush (1991):

It is wrong to suppose that we can design a process that will start with a specific group of young potential leaders and end with finished products. What we can do is to offer promising young people opportunities and challenges favorable to the flowering of whatever leadership gifts they may have. Some will become leaders, partly from what we enabled them to learn, partly from the self-knowledge we helped them to achieve. Beyond that, time and events will teach them. Mistakes and failures will teach them. (p. 27)

Leadership educators are the essential ingredient in the development of the students as leaders. Andenoro (2005) developed the Foundational Approach to Leadership Development Model, and in his model, he believes leadership educators are the foundation of successful leadership education. Leadership educators “provide structure and support for leadership development. Without leadership educators, leadership development does not take place” (Andenoro, 2005, p. 212). Leadership

educators have the awesome opportunity to develop future generations into becoming successful leaders.

Experiential Learning

The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (2000) is convinced “the covenant between the American people and their public colleges and universities must be renewed and strengthened” (p. 13). The Kellogg Commission (2000) is also of the belief college campuses should “[replace] passive modes of instruction that rely on students’ acceptance of material from teachers with a more active process in which students and faculty take responsibility for their own intellectual growth...” (p. 21). Teachers have the awesome responsibility of serving as guides to their students, where the students are active participants in their own education (Carver, 1996). The goal, as defined by Brock and Cameron (1999), is to “change the student who is inactively...sitting in class taking notes and receiving information without thinking or learning very much, into an actively involved student who is mentally engaged and a participant in the learning process” (p. 254).

Teachers who mentally engage their students and invite them to participate in the learning process may be adhering to the premises of experiential learning. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, experiential learning, as defined by Luckmann (1996), is “a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experience” (p. 7). The Experiential Learning Cycle, as developed by Kolb (1984), is the “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (p.

41). The Experiential Learning Cycle consists of four strategies: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation.

Learning may begin at any point of the Experiential Learning Cycle, and a student's point of entry is reflective of his or her own learning style. A student's learning style is the result of a combination of his or her genetic constitution, past life experiences, and the student's current life situation (Kolb et al., 2000). The four learning styles, as described by Kolb et al. (2000), are diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating, and a student with a specific learning style will gravitate towards a particular stage or stages within the Experiential Learning Cycle. For example, a student with an inclination to the diverging learning style will gravitate towards the Concrete Experience (CE) or Reflective Observation (RO) stages (Kolb et al., 2000).

Students are not clay that can be lumped together, but they are, rather, distinct unique individuals with a variety of likes and dislikes, a variety of learning styles and preferences. Teaching to all four learning styles and incorporating all four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle is important for college instructors because it involves students with various learning preferences in the college classroom experience (Brock & Cameron, 1999). Incorporating all four learning stages in the college classroom also allows students with each of the learning preferences to utilize their preferred style, as well as providing them with the opportunity to develop the other three learning styles (Brock & Cameron, 1999). Moreover, utilizing a multitude of the stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle increases students' retention of the knowledge presented in the classroom (Stice, 1987). Stice (1987) concludes "20% is retained if only Abstract

Conceptualization is used; if both Reflective Observation and Abstract Conceptualization are used, retention is increased to 50%; if one uses concrete experience, reflective observation, and abstract conceptualization, it rises to 70%; 90% is retained if all four learning stages are employed” (p. 293). Bonwell and Eison (1991) believe “students must do more than just listen. They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems” (p. iii). More importantly, students involved in all four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle will have more highly developed thinking and problem-solving skills (Brock & Cameron, 1999). All in all, the utilization of the Experiential Learning Cycle has increased benefits to the students involved with its incorporation into the classroom (Arnold et al., 2006).

Reflective Writing

Journaling is a “means for recording personal thoughts, daily experiences, and evolving insights” (Hiemstra, 2001, p. 19), and a learning journal is “essentially a vehicle for reflection” (Moon, 1999a, 4). Similar to a learning journal is an academic journal. An academic journal is typically “based on responses to assigned readings or topics presented in the classroom, and are most often evaluated not for their style or control of formal writing abilities but for their reflection of students’ learning and thinking” (Anson & Beach, 1990, p. 2). A learning journal or an academic journal allows students to put their own thoughts into words, crystallizing the concepts important to them and allowing the instructor to realize the importance of such concepts. Duckworth realized the importance of such:

In my view, there are two aspects to teaching: The first is to put students into contact with phenomena related to the area to be studied—the real thing, not

lectures or books about it—and to help them notice what is interesting; to engage them so they will continue to think and wonder about it. The second is to have the students try to explain the sense they are making, and instead of explaining things to students, to try and understand their sense. (Duckworth, 1977, p. 3)

Journaling allows students to move beyond the knowledge gained through a traditional classroom environment (Hiemstra, 2001), and hopefully, allows “connections [to] often unfold almost magically in the writing process, as learners experience those wonderful ‘ah-ha’ moments through the free writing a journal invites” (Fenwick & Parsons, 2000, p. 155).

Reflection is instrumental within the Experiential Learning Cycle (Moon, 1999b). Proudman (1992) stresses “good experiential learning combines direct experience that is meaningful to the student with guided reflection and analysis” (p. 20). Reflection, as defined by Hatcher and Bringle (1997), is “the intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives” (p. 153). A valuable experience is without meaning unless the experience is carefully considered for its true worth. Reflection is key. It allows students to make the connection between theory and practice and allows the principles learned in the classroom to be applied to their daily lives. Student learning is deepened and strengthened when the abstract becomes the concrete (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). The overall premise of experiential learning is learning from experience through proper reflection (Moon, 1999b).

The most foreseen benefit of adult students keeping reflective, learning journals is the enhanced personal growth and development of the adult students (Hiemstra, 2001). Reflective, learning journals allows adult students to integrate their own personal

experiences with the material presented in the classroom, whereby enhancing their own personal growth as human beings (Hiemstra, 2001). Reflection is the means for transforming a student's current knowledge into new knowledge (Lockyer, Gondoez, & Thivierge, 2004; Moon, 1999b).

Critical reflection is where learners understand the meaning of their experiences (Mezirow, 1981). Critical reflection is not concerned with the how, but with the why or, more specifically, the "awareness of why we attach the meanings we do to reality" (Mezirow, 1981, p. 11). Reflective writing may or may not be the written words of students critically reflecting, but it is a means for it to happen. Reflective learning journals also "help adult learners increase their ability to reflect critically on what they are studying or learning" (Hiemstra, 2001, p. 24). All in all, there are many perceived benefits associated with reflective, learning journals by adult learners.

Student Approaches to Learning

Upon entering a classroom at one of the many colleges and universities devoted to preparing students for the real world, the students either approach learning in a deep manner or in a surface manner. The students who search for understanding of the knowledge presented in the classroom are utilizing a deep approach to learning (Marton & Saljo, 1976a). Students who acquire knowledge merely for passing the exams are utilizing a surface approach to learning (Marton & Saljo, 1976a). Biggs (1987) described a detailed version of the characteristics of deep and surface approaches. A student who adopts a deep approach:

- is interested in the academic task and derives enjoyment from carrying it out;
- searches for the meaning inherent in the task;

- personalizes the task, making it meaningful to their own experience and to the real world;
- integrates aspects or parts of task into a whole, sees relationships between this whole and previous knowledge; and
- tries to theorize about the task, forms hypothesis. (Biggs, 1987, p. 15)

A student who adopts a surface approach:

- sees the task as a demand to be met, a necessary imposition if some other goal is to be reached;
- sees the aspects or parts of the task as discrete and unrelated either to each other or to other tasks;
- is worried about the time the task is taking;
- avoids personal or other meanings the task may have; and
- relies on memorization, attempting to reproduce the surface aspects of the task. (Biggs, 1987, p. 15)

In conclusion, two approaches to learning do exist: “first an orientation towards comprehending the meaning of the materials to be learned; and, second, and orientation towards merely being able to reproduce those materials for the purposes of academic assessment” (Richardson, 1994a, p. 463).

Kennelly and Magin (2002) interviewed 14 students and determined five indicators of a deep approach to learning. The indicators of a deep orientation by the students were as follows:

- D1 search for understanding,
- D2 interest as driver for approach to study/learning,
- D3 attempts to link knowledge/theory to experience, real world situations,
- D4 seeks connections between different elements of disciplinary knowledge/theory, and
- D5 explores subject beyond syllabus specifications. (Kennelly & Magin, 2002, p. 3)

Students who classify learning in any one or combination thereof are approaching learning in a deep fashion. The following are characteristics of a surface approach to learning.

- S1 Attempts to memorize/reproduce selected learning materials,
- S2 reduction to formula knowledge—assessment driven,
- S3 no attempts to link knowledge,
- S4 lack of interest in the subject matter, and
- S5 expressed concerns about fear of failure. (Kennelly & Magin, 2002, p. 4)

Conceptions of Learning

Similar to student approaches to learning is student conceptions of learning. Student conceptions of learning may explain why “students may adopt one approach rather than another, depending upon their conceptions of learning and their conceptions of themselves as learners” (Richardson, 2005, p. 675). Saljo (1979b) discovered five different conceptions of learning in higher education when he asked 90 individuals what ‘learning’ meant to them. These conceptions are:

1. Learning as the increase of knowledge
2. Learning as memorizing
3. Learning as the acquisition of facts or procedures
4. Learning as the abstraction of meaning
5. Learning as an interpretative process aimed at the understanding or reality. (Saljo, 1979b, p. 19)

Students of higher education who perceive learning as the increase of knowledge, as memorizing, and as the acquisition of facts and procedures approach learning in a surface manner. Students perceive learning as the reproduction of the facts presented in the classroom, or they “drum things into [their] head” (Van Rossum, Diejkers, & Hamer, 1985, p. 625). Learning conceptions 1, 2, and 3 are external to the students, where they are not trying to internalize ideas presented in the classroom (Ramsden, 1992). Students

who perceive learning as the abstraction of meaning and as an interpretative process aimed at the understanding of reality adopt a deep approach to learning. Learners are able to “develop [their] way of thinking and [their] actions in such a way that it benefits [their] personality” (Van Rossum et al., 1985, p. 633). Learning conceptions 4 and 5 are internal to the student, and the students utilizing these learning conceptions emphasize the personal aspect of learning (Ramsden, 1992). Overall, the “study of student conceptions is aimed at describing and understanding their learning experiences for the purposes of understanding how students function in a learning environment (Sharma, 1997, p. 127).

Van Rossum, Diejkers, and Hamer (1985) validated Saljo’s five conceptions of learning. Van Rossum and Taylor (1987) found a sixth conception of learning, which they characterized as “a conscious process, fueled by personal interests and directed at obtaining harmony and happiness or changing society” (p. 19).

Approaches to Teaching

College instructors are not all alike. Even when teaching in the same discipline, instructors will approach teaching in various ways. Trigwell, Prosser, and Taylor (1994) interviewed 24 physical science teachers (12 chemistry and 12 physics) at two universities in Australia to determine how they approached teaching their first year courses. From the qualitative data collected from the interviews of the 24 college instructors, five approaches to teaching were identified and are displayed in Figure 2. The approaches range from where the focus of the instruction is strictly teacher-centered

(Approach A and B) to where the focus of the instruction is student-centered (Approach D and E).

APPROACH	DESCRIPTION
A—A teacher-focused strategy with the intention of transmitting information to the students.	This approach focuses on transmitting facts and transmitting demonstrated skills, but not on the relationships between the facts or the skills. The prior knowledge of students is not considered to be important and it is assumed that students can learn without being active in the teaching-learning process.
B—A teacher-focused strategy with the intention that the students acquire the concepts of the discipline.	This approach is one in which the teacher has the intention of helping his or her students acquire the concepts of the discipline and the relationships between them.
C—A teacher/student interaction strategy with the intention that students acquire the concepts of the discipline.	This approach differs from A and B because the teacher actively involves the student in the learning process, helping students acquire the discipline based concepts and the relationships between them.
D—A student-focused strategy aimed at students developing their conception	This approach is one in which the teachers adopt a strategy which is focused on the students and their learning to help students further develop the world view or conception they already hold.
E—A student-focused strategy aimed at students changing their conceptions	This approach is one in which teachers adopt to help their students change their world views or conceptions or phenomena they are studying

Adapted from Trigwell, K., Prosser, M., & Taylor, P. (1994). Qualitative differences in approaches to teaching first year university science. *Higher Education*, 27, 75-84.

Figure 2.

Approaches to Teaching Used by Physical Science Teachers in Australia, N=24

Without relating the two, Trigwell et al. (1994) inferred the approach to teaching of an instructor influences the approaches to learning by the students. Their question that they left unanswered was, “Are the teachers who adopt Approaches A and B more likely to have students who adopt a surface approach to learning than those who adopt

Approaches D and E” (Trigwell et al., 1994, p. 82)? Sheppard and Gilbert (1991) concluded, in a previous study, that teachers who adopt Approaches D and E to teaching are more likely to have students who adopt a deep approach to learning. Student-centered courses encourage students to think on their own, developing personal meaning (Sheppard & Gilbert, 1991).

Kember and Gow (1994) identified two orientations to teaching for higher education: knowledge transmission and learning facilitation. Teachers who are oriented towards knowledge transmission are of the belief that:

their role is restricted to transferring their accumulated knowledge of their discipline to the minds of their students. Such a mindset implies an ‘empty vessel’ model of student learning—attentive minds waiting to receive wisdom poured out from the lecturer’s knowledge base. Teaching becomes a one-way process; the role of the student is to absorb the delivered lecture or copy from an overhead transparency. (p. 71)

This orientation or conception to teaching discourages meaningful learning by the students. Regarding learning facilitation and in the words of a teacher who was interviewed by Kember and Gow (1994):

You’ve got to be able to make an environment where students really want to learn. If you do that, they are much more likely to understand why they learn. And then I think after that, the teacher should be a resource person,...and generally guide the students, I don’t see it as spoonfeeding. (p. 63)

This orientation or conception to teaching encourages meaningful learning by the students. The problem arises when teachers “express attitudes and beliefs about teaching which are not translated into their teaching strategies and methods” (Murray & MacDonald, 1997, p. 331). The teachers say they are facilitators of learning, but their

teaching strategies say otherwise. Their teaching strategies say they are only transmitting knowledge.

How Students Learn

How students learn is an interesting phenomenon that has received much attention in the past 25 years and will receive even more attention in the next 25 years (Richardson, 2005). How students learn can be dependent on the learning environment and how the instructor teaches (Biggs, 1999; Entwistle & Tait, 1990; Ramsden, 1979; Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981; Sadlo & Richardson, 2003; Trigwell et al., 1999). More specifically, how a student approaches learning is influenced by the educational environment. The educational environment is defined as the “assessment methods, curricula, and teaching methods and, to a lesser extent, the atmosphere or ‘ethos’ of the course, program of study, or institution” (Sharma, 1997, p. 129). Trigwell, Prosser, and Waterhouse (1999) are of the belief that “teachers who describe their teaching as an information/teacher-focused approach are more likely to be teaching students who report adopting a surface approach [to learning] in that class” (p. 66). Thus, instructors who are teacher-focused in their planning and implementation of course material tend to teach students who are approaching learning in a surface manner, and instructors who are student-centered tend to teach students who are approaching learning in a deep manner. Generally speaking, Trigwell, Prosser, and Waterhouse (1999) are of the belief that:

Students who perceive the nature of the assessment as encouraging memorization and recall, and who perceive the workload demands of a subject as high, are more likely to adopt a surface approach. A deep approach is found to be associated with perceptions of high quality of teaching, some independence in choosing what is to be learned, and a clear awareness of the goals and standards required in the subject. (p. 58)

As a social science student remarked in a study performed by Ramsden (1979), “I hate to say it, but what you’ve got to do is have a list of the ‘facts’; you write down ten important points and memorize those, then you’ll do all right in the test...” (p. 420). This social science student is not making any effort to learn the material for life, but is only learning the material for the test because of the environment of the class and the way the instructor evaluates his or her students. Most definitely, some teaching strategies are better suited than others in promoting deep learning (Lockyer et al., 2004). Sharma (1997) reported that students’ approaches to learning are associated with the educational environment. If an instructor changes the educational environment for his students, the students will alter their approaches to learning (Sharma, 1997). Eley (1992) discovered the way an instructor teaches influences the way students study the material.

Furthermore, how students approach learning does not remain constant among different disciplines and different academic departments (Entwistle & Tait, 1990; Ramsden, 1979; Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981). Thus, “students’ approaches to learning can then be seen, in part at least, as reactions to the environment provided by the department” (Entwistle & Tait, 1990, p. 190). Academic departments which allow freedom in learning, show relevance of what is learned in the classroom to the students’ daily lives, and instructors utilizing overall ‘good’ teaching practices promotes students approaching learning in a deep fashion (Entwistle & Tait, 1990; Ramsden, 1979; Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981). ‘Good’ teaching “progresses from an emphasis on the reproduction of facts towards the reconstruction of meaning, the definition of good teaching moves from methods which ‘make things stick’ in a painless manner...toward a

view of the lecturer as the facilitator of independent learning” (Entwistle & Tait, 1990, p. 188). Good teaching is also thought to promote understanding in the minds of the students (Entwistle & Tait, 1990). Academic departments which allow little freedom in learning and have a tendency of imposing a heavy workload on the students promote students maintaining a surface approach to learning, where they depend upon rote learning procedures (Entwistle & Tait, 1990; Ramsden, 1979; Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981).

In a recent study, Hall, Ramsey, and Raven (2004) introduced problem-solving exercises, group presentations, and two group assignments as a part of a first-year undergraduate accounting course. The students were administered the Study Process Questionnaire during the first week of lecture and during the last week of lecture. Because of the intervention (problem-solving exercises, group presentations, and two group assignments), the students showed an increase in their deep approach to learning and a decrease in their surface approach to learning (Hall et al., 2004). Despite the positive result of the study, the researchers could not conclude “that the changes in the learning environment caused the changes in students’ approaches to learning” (Hall et al., 2004, p. 501). Research has also concluded that problem-based learning may or may not foster students approaching learning in a deep manner (Entwistle, 1991). The utilization of problem-based learning within the classrooms of higher education creates “problems in implementation created by the different extent to which students require structure, of different kinds, to support their studying...it depends on the student” (Entwistle, 1991, p. 203).

All in all, instructors involved in higher education should provide a variety of opportunities for their students to demonstrate a deep level understanding. Teachers must get their students to think if the students will not think on their own (Biggs, 1999). Teachers must narrow the gap between the good students and the poorer students, where all students are thinking. Good teaching narrows this gap (Biggs, 1999). Imagine an “academic” student, Susan, and a non-academic student, Robert. Susan is “academically committed, she is bright, interested in her studies, and wants do to well” (Biggs, 1999, p. 57). Robert is “less committed than Susan...[and] only wants to put in sufficient effort to pass” (Biggs, 1999, p. 58). Typically, “academic students will adopt a deep approach to learning in their major subjects, often despite their teaching, while non-academic students are likely to a deep approach only under the most favorable teaching conditions” (Biggs, 1999, p. 58). Susan will typically adopt a deep approach to learning and will reach a higher level of understanding, as compared to her counterpart, Robert. Robert will need help from teachers to reach the same level of understanding as Susan. More and more, there is a higher proportion of Robert’s in collegiate classrooms and less of Susan’s. For the same commitment to be seen by both types of students, teachers must engage their students (Biggs, 1999). As described by Biggs (1999), “Good teaching is getting most students to use the higher cognitive level processes that the more academic students use spontaneously” (Biggs, 1999, p. 58). The gap is narrowed between the academic students and the non-academic students.

Good teaching also requires that teachers critically reflect to become better and meet the ever changing needs of the students (Walkington, Christensen, & Kock, 2001).

Walkington, Christensen, and Kock (2002) are of the belief:

Just as the student needs to reflect to learn, so does the teacher to teach. Transferring knowledge is not sufficient, only critical reflection about the initiated learning process can assure the transferred knowledge is transformed into deep learning. It is therefore important to focus on and actively develop the reflective element of teaching. (p. 349)

Critical reflection is the heart and soul of effective teaching, whereby allowing teachers to meet the needs of the students. Good teachers must constantly evaluate and reflect upon the educational environment. As stated by Ramsden (1989):

We, the teachers, need to reflect on what we do that influences the relation between the students and what they learn. It is then our job to act on what we have learned about the relation and our part in it. If the environment is 'impoverished', it is up to us to make it richer... (p. 158)

Good teachers are also the result of good training. Training can increase teachers adopting student-focused teaching strategies (Approached D and E, as mentioned in the Approaches to Teaching), and without training, teachers reduce the extent to which they adopt student-focused teaching strategies and adopt more teacher-centered teaching strategies (Approaches A and B) (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004).

How students learn is also a function of their life experiences and the maturity of the students (Richardson, 1994a; Richardson, 1994b; Richardson, 1995; Saljo, 1979a). Saljo (1979a) is of the belief that "a person's ideas or beliefs about learning may change as a function of his experiences" (p. 450). Essentially, learning, or more specifically, how students approach learning, is a developmental process, where it may be a phenomenon that requires a significant amount of time for some or it may be an activity

that is taken for granted by others (Saljo, 1979a). Mature students are more likely to adopt a deep approach to learning, in relation to their younger counterparts, concluding that age, and the before-mentioned life experiences, is a factor associated with student approaches to learning (Richardson; 1994a; Richardson, 1994b; Richardson, 1995).

Reflection and Student Approaches to Learning (SAL)

Reflection and student approaches to learning are two frameworks rarely associated with each other in the literature (Leung & Kember, 2003). Students who utilize a deep approach to learning are in search of understanding of the material presented in the classroom. Students who utilize reflective thinking are seeking to understand the meaning of their experiences. Within both frameworks, students are seeking to understand. Thus, it is surmised that a close relationship does exist between reflection and student approaches to learning, whereby students who critically reflect are approaching learning in a deep fashion. From previous research (Leung & Kember, 2003; Phan, 2006; Phan, 2007), there is a significant relationship between reflection and student approaches to learning. In these studies, students who take a surface approach to learning are engaged in a non-reflective action, habitual action, where “no attempt is being made to understand the contents acquired” (Phan, 2007, p. 800). Students who take a deep approach to learning are engaged in either the non-reflective action’s thoughtful action (understanding) or introspection (reflection) or the reflective action, critical reflection (Leung & Kember, 2003; Phan, 2006; Phan, 2007). These students are seeking to understand the material presented in the classroom.

In another study reported by McCrindle and Christensen (1995), students enrolled in a freshman biology course were randomly assigned to one of two groups. The students were assigned to either the learning journal group or the scientific report group. The results from the study concluded that the students assigned to the learning journal group developed more sophisticated conceptions of learning (McCrindle & Christensen, 1995). The students assigned to the learning journal group “saw learning less as a process and acquisition of knowledge and facts and more as a process of comprehension, analysis and interpretation” (McCrindle & Christensen, 1995, p. 181). Thus, the proper reflection of the course content through learning journals helped the students approach learning in a deep fashion.

Lockyer, Gondoes, and Thivierge (2004) believe “reflection is the engine that shifts surface learning to deep learning” (p. 50), where the students begin to understand the true meaning of the topics presented in the classroom. Reflection transforms the students’ current knowledge into new knowledge (Lockyer et al., 2004). The students begin to realize the old ways are not necessarily the right ways. They are open to change and open to improving themselves (Moon, 1999b).

For an educator to remain dynamic, he or she “must be engaged in a continuous quest for refining and improving the teaching and learning process” (Silverman & Casazza, 2000, p. 57). Educators must be engaged in a quest, in which, the educator provides good company to his or her students. Educators must be engaged in a quest, in which, the educator is an innovator, a researcher, and a change agent. As an innovator, the educator realizes “the past ways of teaching are not enough” (Silverman & Casazza,

2000, p. 260). As a researcher, the educator embraces the “idea of [a] classroom as [a] laboratory. Students are carefully considered for fuller understanding, and learning tasks are evaluated to determine their effectiveness in different settings and with diverse populations” (Silverman & Casazza, 2000, p. 260). As a change agent, the educator must be willing to “challenge the status quo. They are not satisfied with repeating past successes or accepting failures” (Silverman & Casazza, 2000, p. 260). Educators are willing to take risks and to venture in uncharted territory. Teachers must accept the challenge and become experts in teaching and assist students in their personal growth and development.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine upper-level undergraduate students' perceptions of learning in an agricultural leadership course that emphasized experiential learning methods. Specifically, this study examined student attitudes regarding experiential learning and if students used a surface or deep approach to learning.

More specifically, the researcher investigated the following research questions:

Question 1: As a result of a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning, were the students utilizing a deep approach or surface approach to learning?

Question 2: What were the students' perceptions of experiential learning?

Question 3: What were the indicators of a deep approach to learning as evidenced by the students' reflective writing?

Question 4: How was learning maximized through a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning?

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of all students enrolled in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*, Section's 901 and 902, during the five-week Summer I Session of 2008 at Texas A&M University. The sample consisted of 66 students, 35 students within Section 901 and 31 students within Section 902. The enrolled students were mostly junior or senior level students. The sample was a

purposive sample, or a sample “based upon the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). The sample was selected because the students enrolled in the course were upper-level undergraduate students, in anticipation that they were interested in and found the material relevant to their current and future lives. The study was performed in the summer, where the researcher observed the students daily for five weeks. The researcher had prolonged engagement with the students.

Each class meeting of ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* utilized teaching strategies associated with experiential learning. For the most part, each class began with lecture and discussion regarding a leadership theory, approach, or model, followed by an activity that illustrated the theory or model. Through the hands-on application of the activity, the students were able to connect the theories to their personal lives. With each activity, the students participated in the activity and then reflected upon it critically. The instructor also used movies, case studies, and writing assignments to illustrate the theories with applications. See Appendix B and C for examples of the activities utilized in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*.

The instructor also placed the students into four leadership learning communities for the duration of the five-week course. The students participated in the classroom activities with their leadership learning communities and were responsible for a group project. See Appendix D for the syllabus for ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*.

The study was confidential, and the records of the study were kept private. No identifiers linking the participants to the study were included in any publishable report. Research records were stored securely in a locked filing cabinet, and only the primary researcher and the primary researcher's Graduate Committee Chair had access to the data. This study was IRB approved.

Methods

The proposed study employed procedures and protocols associated with mixed methods research. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, mixed methods research is formally defined as “the class of research where the researcher combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study” (2004, p. 17). The research question dictates which procedure “offers the best chance of obtain[ing] useful answers” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 18). The strengths of both paradigms were incorporated into the methodology of the study. The strengths of mixed methods research include:

- Words, pictures, and narrative can be used to add meaning to numbers.
- Numbers can be used to add precision to words, pictures, and narrative.
- Can provide quantitative and qualitative research strengths.
- Researcher can generate and test a grounded theory.
- Can answer a broader and more complete range of research questions because the researcher is not confined to a single method or approach.
- The researcher can use the strengths of an additional method to overcome the weaknesses in another method by using both in a research study.
- Can provide stronger evidence for a conclusion through convergence and corroboration of findings.
- Can add insights and understanding that might be missed when only a single method is used.

- Can be used to increase the generalizability of the results.
- Qualitative and quantitative research used together produce more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice.
(Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 21)

The first question was answered using procedures associated with the quantitative paradigm. The students enrolled in both sections of *Professional Leadership Development* during the five-week Summer I Session of 2008 were administered the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F) pre-intervention and post-intervention to evaluate the learning approaches of the researcher's students (Biggs et al., 2001). The intervention consisted of the students utilizing experiential learning methods with an emphasis on reflective writing as a course requirement.

Several instruments have been developed to help quantify whether students were approaching learning in a deep or surface fashion. The instrument of interest to the researcher is the Study Process Questionnaire (Biggs, 1987b) and its later companion, the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F) (Biggs, Kember, & Leung, 2001). The R-SPQ-2F is a shortened version of the previous questionnaire, addressing only the surface and deep approaches to learning (Biggs et al., 2001). For the purpose of this study, the R-SPQ-2F was utilized to determine if the students were approaching learning in a deep or surface manner.

The revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F) is composed of "two main scales, Deep Approach (DA) and Surface Approach, (SA) with four subscales, Deep Motive (DM), Deep Strategy (DS), Surface Motive (SM), and Surface Strategy (SS)" (Biggs et al., 2001, p. 141). The meaning of each subscale is as follows: Deep Motive is associated within intrinsic interest, Deep Strategy is associated with

maximize meaning, Surface Motive is associated with fear of failure, and Surface Strategy is associated with rote learning (Biggs et al., 2001).

For the purpose of this study, the two main scales, Deep Approach and Surface Approach, and the students' self-reported responses to the statements within these scales, were of interest to the researcher. Reliability for the R-SPQ-2F was determined using Cronbach alpha for each of the scales present in the instrument. The reliability for each scale was as follows: Deep Approach (0.73) and Surface Approach (0.64), which is considered acceptable and internally consistent (Biggs et al., 2001). The Cronbach alpha for each subscale in the instrument was lower than the researcher wanted, questioning the reliability of the subscales within the instrument. See Appendix F and G for the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire and its Answer Sheet.

The students' self-reported responses to each of the 20 statements were scored using the following system:

The responses to items are scored as follows:

A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, D = 4, E = 5

To obtain main scale scores add item scores as follows:

DA = 1 + 2 + 5 + 6 + 9 + 10 + 13 + 14 + 17 + 18

SA = 3 + 4 + 7 + 8 + 11 + 12 + 15 + 16 + 19 + 20. (Biggs et al., 2001, p. 149)

The students' self-reported responses helped the researcher determine if the students were taking a deep approach or a surface approach to studying. More importantly, the students self-reported responses helped the researcher determine if the students' scores changed from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester.

The design that was utilized to answer research question one was the pre- and post-treatment design, where "participants [were] measured before and after some

treatment, and their before scores [were] compared to their after scores” (Coolidge, 2006, p. 220). In this case, the treatment was experiential learning and reflective writing. The pre-intervention and post-intervention scores for the Deep Approach Scale and the Surface Approach Scale were statistically analyzed using the *t* test for dependent groups (Coolidge, 2006). The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The students’ first assignment, “A Leader Defined”, was the method behind obtaining demographic data. The demographics of interest to the researcher were gender, age or life experiences, and major of the student. Each demographic variable was measured with the Deep Approach Scale and the Surface Approach Scale; therefore, six two-way ANOVA’s were performed. Each two-way ANOVA was a two-factor factorial with repeats on the second factor, constituting a mixed model ANOVA. A mixed model ANOVA “indicates that we have a factorial study in which one or more of the factors are housed between participants (Between People) and one or more of the factors are housed within participants (Within People)” (H. Tolson, personal communication, April 8, 2008). For example, the first two-way ANOVA was a two-factor factorial with repeats on the second factor. Factor 1 constituted gender and Factor 2 constituted the Deep Approach Scale. Factor 1, gender, consisted of two levels (male and female), and Factor 2, Deep Approach Scale, consisted of two levels (pre-intervention and post-intervention). The dimensionality of each two way ANOVA was 2×2 . For example, within ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*, the class consisted of males and females (2 levels of Factor 1). Both the males and females were measured pre-

intervention and post-intervention (2 levels of Factor 2). The remaining five two way ANOVA's were Gender x Surface Approach, Age x Deep Approach, Age x Surface Approach, Major x Deep Approach, and Major x Surface Approach.

The last three research questions were answered using procedures associated with the qualitative paradigm. In order to answer the last three questions, personal documents consisting of the students' reflective journals and their comprehensive reflective papers were utilized as the data collection tool (Merriam, 1998). More specifically, researcher-generated documents were utilized, which were produced for the researcher by the students with the research purpose in mind (Merriam, 1998). No other data collection tools were employed to answer the last three questions, whereby adhering to the premise that "an entire study can be based on personal documents" (Merriam, 1998, p. 116). Typically, there are three categories of qualitative data: direct quotes obtained through interviews, the respondents' actions recorded in observations, and quotations extracted through documents (Merriam, 1998). This study used the students' quotes extracted from their reflective writings, i.e. personal documents, as the qualitative data source.

The students enrolled in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* were asked to keep a reflective journal. The purpose of the reflective journals in *Professional Leadership Development* was to help the students take what was learned in the classroom and apply it to their daily lives (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). More specifically, as defined by Webster and Hoover (2006), the "reflection process transforms the experience for the learner" (p. 94), and journaling allows students to determine what is

important to them and encourages teachers to expand upon these important concepts (Francis, 1995). Professional Leadership Development combined reflection and journaling in an attempt to create an environment conducive to the students taking a deep approach to learning.

The reflective journals were semi-structured in design (Merriam, 1998). The students had guidelines they were asked to follow, but were also allowed the opportunity to express their ideas freely. Totally unstructured journals become a summary of the material presented in the classroom, rather than serving as a reflective tool where the students consider the material in light of how the material affects their daily lives (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). Following each day of classroom instruction, the students wrote in their reflective journals and were asked to include three key elements. To begin with, the students were required to demonstrate a clear understanding of the leadership concepts presented in the course and through the textbook. The students presented a brief summary of the key points, as the material is covered in class, by answering the question, “What did I learn today?” Secondly, the students were instructed to answer the question, “What major new insights came out of the class for you?” Specifically, what did the material mean to you? Lastly, as the final requirement for each journal entry, the students were asked to answer the question, “How can the information learned in the classroom be applied to your daily life?” How can you make sense of the random leadership concepts and make the theories real to you? Essentially, each day, the students determined what is important to them through their responses to the three above-mentioned questions.

Upon completion of the course, the students were asked to prepare a reflective paper, which served as a comprehensive reflection of the course (Fenwick & Parsons, 2000). The students were required to incorporate all the same elements as in their reflective journals. Additionally, the students answered the question, “How has the act of reflecting made the learning process more meaningful to you?” The students’ comprehensive reflective papers were analyzed to “determine whether [the] students [did] reflect upon their practice and the depth of that reflective thinking” (Kember et al., 1999, p. 19).

Both the students’ reflective journals and reflective papers were submitted to the primary researcher, where the papers were analyzed for common themes. The data analysis technique used was content analysis (Merriam, 1998). Content analysis is a “process [that] involves the simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories [or themes] that capture relevant characteristics of the document’s content” (Merriam, 1998, p. 160). Stated another way, “Content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). From the students’ reflective journals and paper, the researcher searched each manuscript for recurring words or themes. The students’ words from their reflective journals and reflective papers added meaning to the numbers collected in the quantitative portion of this study.

The internal validity or “how [the] research findings match reality” (Merriam, 1998, p. 201) was enhanced through the use of long-term observation of the respondents.

The internal validity or trustworthiness was also established through member checks (Merriam, 1998). Member checks were performed through weekly spot checks of the students' journal entries, whereby open communication was established between the primary researcher and her students. The primary researcher clarified any misunderstandings and worked to ensure the students were completing the assignment as designed. Peer debriefing of the data collected was performed to assure trustworthiness. A colleague with much knowledge regarding the subject at hand reviewed the data collected (see Appendix H). Reliability or "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam, 1998, p. 205) was enhanced through an audit trail of the raw data. The audit trail of raw data allows other researchers to understand how the researcher, in question, arrived at his or her results (Merriam, 1998). The researcher kept a reflexive journal, where she wrote in detail how the data was collected and how and why decisions were made (Merriam, 1998). External validity, or how the findings of one study can be applied to other situations, i. e. transferability, was established through the researcher using thick, rich description. Thick, rich description will allow other researchers to "determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred" (Merriam, 1998, p. 211).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine upper-level undergraduate students' perceptions of learning in an agricultural leadership course that emphasized experiential learning methods. Specifically, this study examined student attitudes regarding experiential learning and if students used a surface or deep approach to learning.

More specifically, the researcher investigated the following research questions:

Question 1: As a result of a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning, were the students utilizing a deep approach or surface approach to learning?

Question 2: What were the students' perceptions of experiential learning?

Question 3: What were the indicators of a deep approach to learning as evidenced by the students' reflective writing?

Question 4: How was learning maximized through a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning?

Context of the Study

The context surrounding the study constituted careful observation of the 66 students enrolled in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* during the Summer I Session of 2008. Of the 66 students involved in the study, 35 students were in Section 901 and 31 students were in Section 902. The demographics of interest to the researcher were gender, age or life experience, and major of the students enrolled in the

class at Texas A&M University. For this study, 26 of the 66 students were male and 40 students were female. In regards to age or life experience, 50 of the 66 students were less than or equal to 22 years of age, and 16 students were 23 years of age or older. Regarding the students' majors, 29 of the 66 students were ALED majors, and 37 were majors outside of the department. See Table 1 for the demographics of the sample.

Table 1

Demographic Variables of the Students Enrolled in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* at Texas A&M University, N=66

	Number of Students	Percentage
Gender		
Male	26	39.40%
Female	40	60.60%
Age		
≤ 22	50	75.76%
> 23	16	24.24%
Major		
ALED	29	43.94%
Non-Major	37	56.06%

Each student was assigned a code to provide an audit trail of all the raw data. The code consisted of a number from 1 to 66, followed by three letters. The first letter represented gender, and a student was either given “M” for male or “F” for female. The second letter represented age, and a student was either given “Y” for being 22 years of age and younger or “O” for being 23 years of age and older. The last letter represented major and a student was given either “A” for being an Agricultural Leadership and Development (ALED) major or “E” for other majors. As an example, student 53FYE was number 53, a female, 22 years of age or younger, and a major other than Agricultural Leadership and Development (ALED) at Texas A&M University. See Appendix I for the codes of the 66 students within the sample.

Each class meeting of ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* utilized teaching strategies associated with experiential learning. For the most part, each class began with lecture and discussion regarding a leadership theory, approach, or model, followed by an activity that illustrated the theory or model. Through the hands-on application of the activity, the students were able to connect the theories to their own personal lives. With each activity, the students participated in the activity and then reflected upon it critically. The instructor also used movies, case studies, and writing assignments to illustrate the theories with applications. The instructor also placed the students into four leadership learning communities for the duration of the five-week course. The students participated in the classroom activities with their leadership learning communities and were responsible for a group project.

Findings Related to Question 1

The first question was answered using procedures associated with the quantitative paradigm. The students' self-reported responses, both pre-intervention and post-intervention, to the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The students' self-reported responses to the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire helped the researcher determine if the students were taking a deep approach or a surface approach to studying. More importantly, the students self-reported responses helped the researcher determine if the students' scores changed from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester. Firstly, the data was analyzed using a dependent t test to determine if the students' post-intervention scores for the Deep Approach Scale was significantly different from their pre-intervention scores. The mean for the pre-intervention Deep Approach Scale was 28.42, and the mean for the post-intervention Deep Approach Scale was 28.88. While there was difference in the students' pre-intervention scores and their post-intervention scores, it was determined that there was not a significant difference ($0.439 > 0.05$). The students' post-intervention scores for the Deep Approach Scale were statistically similar to their pre-intervention scores (Table 2).

The students' scores were next analyzed using a dependent t test to determine if their post-intervention scores for the Surface Approach Scale were significantly different from their pre-intervention scores. The mean for the pre-intervention Surface Approach Scale was 26.08, and the mean for the post-intervention Surface Approach Scale was 27.11. No significant difference existed between the pre- and post-intervention scores

($0.136 > 0.05$). The students' post-intervention scores for the Surface Approach Scale were statistically similar to their pre-intervention scores (Table 2).

Table 2

**Dependent *t* Tests for the Deep Approach Scale & the Surface Approach Scale,
N=66**

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean*</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair D _{Ap} re – D _{Ap} ost	66	28.42 – 28.88	65	-0.781	0.439
Pair S _{Ap} re – S _{Ap} ost	66	26.01 – 27.11	65	-1.510	0.136

** Minimum possible score = 0; Maximum possible score = 50*

Each demographic variable—gender, age or life experiences, and major at Texas A&M University—was measured with the Deep Approach Scale and the Surface Approach Scale; therefore, six two-way ANOVA's were performed. The first two-way ANOVA consisted of the factors Gender and the Deep Approach Scale. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the Gender x Deep Approach Scale. There was not a significant interaction ($0.928 > 0.05$), nor was there a significant difference between gender ($0.439 > 0.05$) and within the Deep Approach Scale ($0.276 > 0.05$). See Table 4 for the Analysis of Variance for Gender x Deep Approach Scale.

Table 3**Descriptive Statistics for Gender x Deep Approach Scale, N=66**

	N	Mean*	Std. Dev
Pre-Intervention (DA)			
Male	27	27.33	6.439
Female	39	29.18	7.134
Post-Intervention (DA)			
Male	27	27.85	6.194
Female	39	29.59	7.542

* *Minimum possible score = 0; Maximum possible score = 50*

Table 4**Analysis of Variance for Gender x Deep Approach Scale, N=66**

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	η	<i>p</i>
Between Subjects				
Gender	1	1.205	102.471	0.276
error	64	(85.055)		
Within Subjects				
Deep Approach	1	0.606	6.881	0.439
Deep Approach x Gender	1	0.093	0.008	0.928
error	64	(11.361)		

* $p < 0.05$

The second two-way ANOVA consisted of the factors Gender and the Surface Approach Scale. Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for the Gender x Surface Approach Scale. There was not a significant interaction ($0.617 > 0.05$), nor was there a significant difference between gender ($0.122 > 0.05$) and within the Surface Approach Scale ($0.145 > 0.05$). See Table 6 for the Analysis of Variance for the Gender x Surface Approach Scale.

Table 5**Descriptive Statistics for Gender x Surface Approach Scale, N=66**

	N	Mean*	Std. Dev
Pre-Intervention (SA)			
Male	27	27.22	7.567
Female	39	25.28	6.673
Post-Intervention (SA)			
Male	27	28.68	6.540
Female	39	26.03	6.543

* *Minimum possible score = 0; Maximum possible score = 50*

Table 6**Analysis of Variance for Gender x Surface Approach Scale, N=66**

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	η	<i>p</i>
Between Subjects				
Gender	1	2.176	167.422	0.145
error	64	(76.945)		
Within Subjects				
Surface Approach	1	2.456	38.191	0.122
Surface Approach x Gender	1	0.252	3.918	0.617
error	64	(15.548)		

* $p < 0.05$

The third two-way ANOVA consisted of the factors age or life experiences and the Deep Approach Scale. Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics for the Age x Deep Approach Scale. There was not a significant interaction ($0.134 > 0.05$), nor was there a significant difference between age or life experiences ($0.150 > 0.05$) and within the Deep Approach Scale ($0.847 > 0.05$). See Table 8 for the Analysis of Variance for the Age x Deep Approach Scale.

Table 7**Descriptive Statistics for Age x Deep Approach Scale, N=66**

	N	Mean*	Std. Dev
Pre-Intervention (DA)			
≤ 22	50	28.76	6.317
> 23	16	27.39	8.516
Post-Intervention (DA)			
≤ 22	50	28.72	6.519
> 23	16	29.38	8.640

* Minimum possible score = 0; Maximum possible score = 50

Table 8**Analysis of Variance for Age x Deep Approach Scale, N=66**

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	η	<i>p</i>
Between Subjects				
Age	1	0.037	3.230	0.847
error	64	(86.605)		
Within Subjects				
Deep Approach	1	2.123	23.282	0.150
Deep Approach x Age	1	2.300	25.222	0.134
error	64	(10.968)		

* $p < 0.05$

The fourth two-way ANOVA consisted of the factors age or life experiences and the Surface Approach Scale. Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics for the Age x Surface Approach Scale. There was not a significant interaction ($0.268 > 0.05$), nor was there a significant difference between age or life experiences ($0.066 > 0.05$) and within the Surface Approach Scale ($0.227 > 0.05$). See Table 10 for the Analysis of Variance for the Age x Surface Approach Scale.

Table 9**Descriptive Statistics for Age x Surface Approach Scale, N=66**

	N	Mean*	Std. Dev
Pre-Intervention (SA)			
≤ 22	50	26.85	7.099
> 23	16	23.75	6.618
Post-Intervention (SA)			
≤ 22	50	27.42	6.155
> 23	16	26.13	8.057

* Minimum possible score = 0; Maximum possible score = 50

Table 10**Analysis of Variance for Age x Surface Approach Scale, N=66**

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	η	<i>p</i>
Between Subjects				
Age	1	1.485	115.474	0.227
error	64	(77.757)		
Within Subjects				
Surface Approach	1	3.503	53.640	0.066
Surface Approach x Age	1	1.247	19.095	0.268
error	64	(15.311)		

* $p < 0.05$

The fifth two-way ANOVA consisted of the factors major and the Deep Approach Scale. Table 11 shows the descriptive statistics for the Major x Deep Approach Scale. There was not a significant interaction ($0.383 > 0.05$), nor was there a significant difference between major ($0.526 > 0.05$) or within the Deep Approach Scale ($0.604 > 0.05$). See Table 12 for the Analysis of Variance for the Major x Deep Approach Scale.

Table 11**Descriptive Statistics for Major x Deep Approach Scale, N=66**

	N	Mean*	Std. Dev
Pre-Intervention (DA)			
Major	28	29.21	6.350
Non-Major	38	27.84	7.254
Post-Intervention (DA)			
Major	28	29.07	6.359
Non-Major	38	28.74	7.558

* Minimum possible score = 0; Maximum possible score = 50

Table 12**Analysis of Variance for Major x Deep Approach Scale, N=66**

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	η	<i>p</i>
Between Subjects				
Major	1	0.272	23.481	0.604
error	64	(86.289)		
Within Subjects				
Deep Approach	1	0.406	4.557	0.526
Deep Approach x Major	1	0.773	8.678	0.383
error	64	(11.227)		

* $p < 0.05$

The final two-way ANOVA consisted of the factors major and the Surface Approach Scale. Table 13 shows the descriptive statistics for the Major x Surface Approach Scale. There was not a significant interaction ($0.419 > 0.05$), nor was there a significant difference between major ($0.112 > 0.05$) and within the Surface Approach Scale ($0.477 > 0.05$). See Table 14 for the Analysis of Variance for the Major x Surface Approach Scale.

Table 13**Descriptive Statistics for Major x Surface Approach Scale, N=66**

	N	Mean*	Std. Dev
Pre-Intervention (SA)			
Major	28	25.11	6.641
Non-Major	38	26.79	7.360
Post-Intervention (SA)			
Major	28	26.79	6.585
Non-Major	38	27.34	6.727

* Minimum possible score = 0; Maximum possible score = 50

Table 14**Analysis of Variance for Major x Surface Approach Scale, N=66**

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	η	<i>p</i>
Between Subjects				
Major	1	0.512	40.399	0.477
error	64	(78.930)		
Within Subjects				
Surface Approach	1	2.597	40.128	0.112
Surface Approach x Major	1	0.661	10.219	0.419
error	64	(15.449)		

* $p < 0.05$

Findings Related to Question's 2, 3, and 4*Content Analysis*

Content analysis of the students' reflective journals and papers produced three themes: the students' perceptions of experiential learning, the indicators of a deep approach to learning, and how learning was maximized (See Appendix J). The first theme supported the Experiential Learning Cycle, with the students recognizing each stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle. They ultimately voiced in their reflective writing their perceptions of experiential learning. The students supported each of the

four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle: Concrete Experiences, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation.

The Students' Perceptions of Experiential Learning

As shown in Figure 3, the instructor for ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* utilized teaching strategies that supported all four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle. The instructor did not stay with a single teaching strategy, but used a multitude of teaching strategies, in hopes of reaching every type of learner. One student eloquently wrote, "I feel like I understand leadership on a deeper level since I was taking notes, writing a daily journal, [and] then performing the many different activities that we did daily in class" (13FYA). Another student commented, "I enjoyed the course because it was not strictly a lecture based class. I felt the assignments, activities, and the discussions has benefited towards my learning style" (23MYA). Utilizing multiple teaching strategies that supported the stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle was a "...style of teaching [that was] very rewarding for the student and the teacher" (65MOE). As one student remarked, "I have gotten [something] out of this class that cannot be learned from the book...it comes from reflection, interaction, and an open atmosphere... (43FYE).

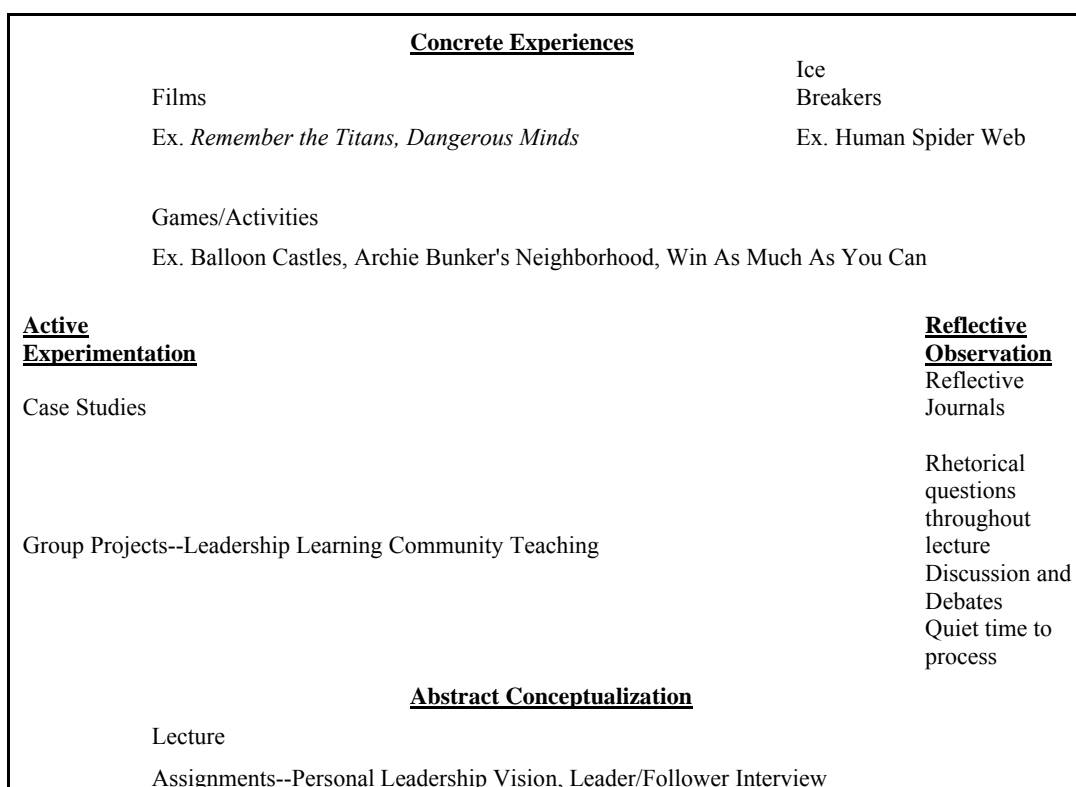


Figure 3.

Teaching Strategies That Supported the Experiential Learning Cycle

Note. Adapted from Dixon (1987)

Concrete Experiences

In their reflective journals and papers, the students discussed the different strategies that supported the four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle. Within the Concrete Experiences stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle, the students discussed the activities and the films utilized with the classroom environment. Regarding the activities, one student said:

Another aspect of this class that I truly enjoyed was the activities that we did in class. I think that something like leadership is hard to sit and lecture on... The

activities in class were very effective in reinforcing the theories that we talked about in class and helped to show us in a way that was tangible and easy to see instead of just words and slides. (26MYE)

As another said, “I learned something from them [activities]...” (27FOA). An older gentleman with many life experiences was a vital participant in the class. He looked at the activities from not the student perspective, but from the perspective of a counselor to the younger, and less experienced, students. Here is what he had to say about the activities:

The use of class activities during the course of teaching the various styles was a good way to reinforce the traits of each leadership style, model, or theory. Without the activities, the students have only book knowledge and no practical experience. I know this experience is hard to obtain and anything that can be done in the classroom to broaden their experiences will be valuable. Although they consider some of the exercises silly and pointless, one day they will appreciate the class, especially when they are faced with difficult situations involving leadership. They may not actively think about the class and a specific leadership style, but the answer to their problem will be in their subconscious. (14MOA)

The students included the activities and their perceptions of the activities in their reflective journals and papers. All in all, students reflected upon different activities in their reflective writing. For example, one student wrote extensively in his journal about the “Balloon Castle” activity:

As a class, we were all given balloons and told to make a balloon castle, and then told we were going to combine them. Each group looked at this as an individual group task and not one group task. Every group made their own balloon castle and when we tried to collaborate the castles it wasn’t successful. This can very easily relate to real life. If everybody is in it just for themselves, then the outcome isn’t going to be very successful. ...if individuals will not mind sacrificing a little, overall the outcome will be much greater... (6MYE)

Another student wrote about the activity and her perception of the activity, “Unequal Resources.” She said:

Today, we did a group activity to show that when a leader favors one person or one group that the person or group that is not favored can never get ahead. I never realized that when favoritism is taking place who is not being favored can never get ahead because they will never receive the information. Information is power. (27FOA)

Discussion of the activities was well represented in the students' reflective journals and papers. Another student reinforced the activity, "Archie Bunker", in her reflective journal by saying:

Diversity can be between anything and anyone. It is how you deal with diversity that makes you really understand it and cope with it. We played this activity in class today that split us up into three groups. Each group was different than the other in forms of money, colors, towns, etc. We were diverse from one another. We had to learn how to manipulate our situation to the best of our ability. We had to work with one another in our specific 'town' as well as work with people outside of our 'town'. This taught us that in real life we are not always going to be surrounded by people like us, or people that we want to be surrounded by. We have to learn to deal with real people in a not so perfect setting. We have to also learn how to make do with what we have and learn to use it to the best of our ability...just as we learned in the activity today. (53FYE)

The activities were utilized in the classroom to reinforce and demonstrate the leadership concepts.

The students also discussed the films as a teaching strategy that supported the Concrete Experiences stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle. One student included his feelings regarding the movie, *Remember the Titans*, in his reflective journal. He said:

Today, we watched a movie clip of *Remember the Titans*. The clip was about how leadership can change. There are everyday situations at which we will have to adapt ourselves and use different styles of leadership. One day, we can be directing school children and the next day we can be teaching a workshop on how to become successful. Leadership changes based on a situation and can help a group achieve its goal. (12MYA)

Another student remarked about her feelings regarding the movie, "Dangerous Minds."

She said:

We can choose whether we want to be in the in-group or in the out-group. Our actions and words speak very loud. The students in *Dangerous Minds* wanted to be in the out-group. They did everything in their power to make sure they did only what was required of themselves and nothing else. The teacher worked very hard to bring each and every student to the in-group. She succeeded! (13FOA)

Various movies were incorporated throughout numerous lectures, allowing the students to experience and personalize the leadership concepts.

Reflective Observation

In the students' reflective journals and papers, they discussed the different strategies that supported the stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle. Within the Reflective Observation stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle, the students commented on how the reflective journals, rhetorical questions throughout lecture, and discussion were utilized in the classroom. To begin with, the students included how reflective writing was effective for them in the experiential learning process. Every day, the students were required to apply what was learned in the classroom to their daily lives, and each student completed this requirement. One student wrote:

My reflection of this entire class makes me think of so many life stores that tie into much of what I have learned. Keeping the journal has tremendously helped with understanding the information covered, especially since we learned all this in four weeks. (9MYA)

Several students commented on how keeping a reflective journal allowed them to really learn. For example, one student wrote:

I believe that [journaling] will help me to really learn and not just learn what is needed for the test in order to pass the class. Since the class had less stress on making THE grade for different assignments, I felt more comfortable just letting myself learn what was being taught... (22FOE)

Along the same line, another student wrote, “This journal helped me to really absorb leadership techniques and styles, instead of just memorizing them to pass the exam” (44FYE). Reflective writing also served as a means for retaining the leadership concepts for the students. One student eloquently wrote about reflective writing saying, “[it]...helped me retain information, sparked my interest in the course, and prepared me for the future” (39MYE). Another student said, “I feel like keeping a daily journal has made me remember a lot more information about leadership, than had I not kept one” (8FYE). In the words of a completely different student, “For me, journaling served as a filing cabinet for the things I learned each day” (22FOE).

Three of the students (3MYE, 11MOA, and 28FYE) included in their comprehensive reflective papers on how reflective writing was not a beneficial component of experiential learning. One of the students was a non-traditional student who attends school, along with having two young children and a wife at home and a full-time job. He wrote:

This summer I had hoped that our journals would help me to find some deeper meaning in the subjects we had discussed in classes. However, my journal really only served as a reiteration of the subjects we had discussed and did little to help me think deeper about the topics.

Trying to find an applicable example of how the lessons we covered in class applied to my life became more of a chore than a thought provoking exploration. Having been out of school for the last five years as an enlisted Marine, I have had a veritable cornucopia of experiences. Still, it was next to impossible to conjure up a real world example for every subject we covered in class. Don't get me wrong, I have enjoyed this course thoroughly and I have thought numerous times of how the information we discussed would be useful, but I don't think I could name those events off hand if I had to. Because of this lack of recollection, the journal was just one more thing I had to do for a check in the box. I think if this class was the only one I had or I had nothing else to do I might think deeper

about the things we talked about in class but who has that kind of time?
(11MOA)

The students also discussed how rhetorical questions were a teaching strategy that supported the Reflective Observation stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle. One student wrote:

We started off the class with the two questions we were left with from the day before. Do you think leaders are born or made? Can a person learn leadership? Personally, I think leaders are born. Everyone is born with certain personality traits....For example, my sister was not born a leader. She preferred to be a follower....Recently, she was offered a management position at her job for being such a hard worker. She went to many leadership seminars and classes, but when she was placed into the leadership position, she wasn't able to handle it. Yes, she was an excellent worker, but definitely not a leader. (30FYE)

Another student remarked to the same question, but she had a different perspective. She said:

At the beginning of this class, we were asked if we thought leaders were born or made. At the time, I didn't really know how to answer that. Now, I am confident in saying that I don't think someone has to be born a leader to lead. If it is in his or her cards to be a leader, I feel like the person will accomplish things in life that will build his or her character, as well as their leadership qualities. It was brought to my attention recently, during a Bible study lesson, that King David is a perfect example of this. He was not born into a leadership position, but he did one day become a great leader. God put him through many trials that built his character and taught him the skills that he needed to lead his people. (37FOE)

Another student felt:

Personally, I believe that a leader is born and is made. While there are certain characteristics that I do not think can be learned—for example, charisma—there are some aspects to effective leadership that can be developed—for instance, social skills. I think that there are some people who are natural-born leaders, but I also believe that in order to reach their complete potential, they should develop their skills as best as they can. (38FYE)

Discussions were also an integral component of the Reflective Observation stage conducive to experiential learning. These discussions were written extensively by the

students in their reflective journals. The students dissected the discussions, and ultimately voiced their view. For example, here is an excerpt from a student's journal:

America as a whole is separated into classes. There is the high class, the middle class, and the low class. When we discussed the views of each in the class, it was discovered that we all believed many different things. Every person agreed that the rich get richer, but the confrontation came when we started to talk about the middle class and especially the low class. Some people believe that if you try hard enough, anyone can do anything. I personally believe that is ignorant. There are so many obstacles that face the lower class that it makes it virtually impossible for them to move to middle much less high class. It is possible for a few to make it, but... (6MYE)

Another student in the same class viewed the discussion in a completely different way.

She felt:

I'm somewhat amazed at how many of my fellow classmates actually believe that circumstances in life can cause a person to fail. I personally like what one girl said...I come from a small town...no one went to college...I was poor...I didn't wait for an invitation to make something of myself. She's going to make a great leader inspiring others to remove all excuses. (18MYE)

These two students had divergent thinking for the same topic. As said by another student, "I think that people need to realize that we are all different and that it doesn't make us wrong it just means we need to make sure that we appreciate what other people believe and to respect them and their thoughts" (26FYE).

One of the students (22FOE) began the conversation on ethics and remarked how her friend, who happens to be a lawyer, was defending a rapist. She felt it was unethical for her friend to represent the rapist. Another student wrote his comments to the discussion in his reflective journal, and he said:

In class today, we had a pretty in depth and heated discussion on the subject of ethics. While I do sympathize with the girl that said she was a rape victim, I think she was incorrect for scolding her friend who was a defense attorney. I think when you are a public servant whether it is an ER doctor, or a firefighter,

sometimes when you are under oath to serve the public you have certain things you may or may not want to do, in spite of what other people say. A firefighter still must put out a fire at a house, even if that house was being used exclusively to sell dangerous drugs. A doctor still must operate on a gang member who has been shot by police, even if that gang member may have killed innocent bystanders earlier in a robbery. I think that when you are a public servant you must set aside your own personal beliefs and opinions, and do the job you were paid to do, even if that means going against your own thoughts. (2MOA)

One student remarked:

I think having discussions in class daily helped me personally retain the information that [the researcher] was trying to relay to us. The way that she was able to produce more clear thoughts through all of the technical jargon...which in the end really helped me to understand the material in a better way. (2MOA)

Abstract Conceptualization

In the students' reflective journals and papers, they discussed the different strategies that supported the stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle. Within the Abstract Conceptualization stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle, the students commented on how the various assignments were conducive to experiential learning. A student remarked about the Leadership Vision assignment, and she said, "The most beneficial real life assignment for me would have to have been the vision paper. It helped me realize what guides my life and the leader I am and want to become" (54FYA). Another student remarked about the Leader and Follower Interview and Paper assignment. She said:

One of my favorite projects was the "Leader Follower Interviews." At first, I really disliked the project. One of my participants had answered my questions wrong. I quickly used my creativity to find a way to resolve the problem. I realized that this project was a great way for me to assess my leadership skills and my ability to work as a successful consultant. I ended up interviewing three people and did a self-assessment. I had a leader and a follower assess my leadership skills. Then, I had another follower assess the leadership skills of the other leader. The results came back great. I do show good leadership skills. I also

realized that the leader I am working with is capable of being a strong leader. She could easily see my leadership skills as others saw them. She is very intelligent and able to understand the concepts. She just needs some motivation and a confidence boost. I am very confident that I can accomplish this. I plan to interview all of the followers soon to continue to help the leader. From this project, I learned that I am a great coach, team leader, strong motivator, provide lots of guidance and support, and I am able to relate well with others. (40FOA)

A student wrote about the Leader and Follower Interview and Paper in her reflective journal and her interpretation of the assignment. She said:

The Leader and Follower Interview and Paper was probably one of the most challenging activities we did in this class. I chose to interview my mom as the leader and myself as the follower. I don't think ever In my 23 years of being alive, have me and my mom agreed...After doing the summary paper at the end, it became clear to me that we do actually agree on some things and that maybe we should reevaluate our relationship as mother and daughter. (19FOE)

The assignments were designed to provide the students with the opportunity to grow as a leader and as a person. The students did not include any comments in their reflective journals and papers regarding the lecture component of the Abstract Conceptualization stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle.

Active Experimentation

In their reflective journals and papers, the students discussed the different strategies that supported the stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle. For the Active Experimentation stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle, students commented on how the various case studies were conducive to experiential learning. When appropriate, the students were given case studies to enhance the leadership concepts and demonstrate the concepts. One student remarked about the case study that was utilized in conjunction with path-goal theory. He said, "The case study made the path-goal theory come alive for me. I saw how the path-goal theory worked and saw it in everyday terms" (50MYE).

Another student wrote about the case study that was used as a teaching strategy for the contingency theory. She said, “Because of the case study, I now understand the contingency theory. I don’t like it, but I understand it” (49FYA).

Another component of the Active Experimentation stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle was the required group project. The students were asked to conduct an activity in their leadership learning community that enhanced the following leadership concepts: Situational Approach, Contingency Theory, LMX Theory, Transformational Leadership, or Team Leadership. For this assignment, the students were required to thoroughly describe the activity that was conducted in class, conduct the activity, and finally, describe the key points that they would retain from the activity. One student remarked in her reflective journal that “teaching the activity was the best day of class for me. A teacher must thoroughly understand the material he or she is teaching. I really understand the Contingency Theory!! I was an active participant in the learning process” (47FOE). Another student commented:

Today, we were responsible for the activity in conjunction with team leadership. We did an activity about Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning. Guess what? This is so true. Our team went through these stages getting ready for teaching our activity. We first had to get to know each other (form). We secondly had to talk and sometimes argue about which idea was best (storm). We then decided on which idea was best (norm). We did the activity (perform). Finally, after we presented our activity, we talked as a group about what went good and what went bad and adjourned. Wow! (16FYA)

The students, when teaching the activities, were actively experimenting with the knowledge they had gained.

The students were also very complimentary in their reflective journals and papers of the importance of interacting with their leadership learning communities on a daily basis. One student said:

I loved how we really got to know our groups and interact with them on a daily basis. This is an important part of learning that we do not experience in many classes. It was different, eye opening, thought provoking, and fun. (13FYA)

Another student commented, “We came to this class as strangers, but we will leave as friends (18FYE).” Class interaction was also important to another student. She said:

I have taken smaller courses here at A&M, but rarely is the atmosphere so open and welcoming that I feel comfortable talking out loud. In learning leadership skills, I think we also found an opportunity to step up to the plate and bring our ideas forward. (43FYE)

Experiential learning and using teaching strategies associated with the Experiential Learning Cycle produced an environment where the students were involved, or as said by one of the students, “I really felt like I was part of the class and not just another student sitting in a desk. I was involved... (21FYE).”

The Indicators of a Deep Approach to Learning

The second theme that arose from the content analysis of the students’ reflective journals and papers included the indicators of a deep approach to learning, which served as theoretical triangulation. Within this theme, four categories were present: search for understanding; interest as a driver for approach to study/learning; attempt to link knowledge/theory to experience, real world situations; and seek connections between different elements of disciplinary knowledge/theory. The researcher sought these indicators within the students’ reflective writing by utilizing a rubric developed by

Kennelly and Magin (2002). The five indicators of a deep orientation by the students were as follows:

- D1 search for understanding,
- D2 interest as driver for approach to study/learning,
- D3 attempts to link knowledge/theory to experience, real world situations,
- D4 seeks connections between different elements of disciplinary knowledge/theory, and
- D5 explores subject beyond syllabus specifications. (Kennelly & Magin, 2002, p. 3)

The fifth indicator of a deep approach to learning was not evident in the students' reflective journals and papers. See Appendix K for the indicators of a deep approach to learning within the students' reflective writing.

D1—Search for Understanding

The first category was the students' search for understanding. As one student said, "I understand the processes that deal with leadership" (12MYA). In the words of another student, "It is one thing for me to have an idea of these concepts, but it is a whole other thing to have a real understanding of them and know how to incorporate them into my life" (37FOE). Following each day of class, the students were required to incorporate and apply the leadership concepts to their lives in their reflective journals. The application of the leadership concepts "helped me in my search for understanding" (50FYE). For example, this same student wrote about transformational leadership:

My favorite theory was Transformational Leadership. I am really big on the whole spiritual quest for enlightenment, and the main practice is to achieve transformation. The key difference I see between transformational leadership (TL) and transformational spirituality (TS) is that the TL targets transformation of the follower, and TS targets transformation within you. I think TL is so interesting because you aren't just influencing someone, you are helping them evolve. (50FYE)

Another student wrote:

Today, we discussed the importance of ethics, and the first thing that came to my mind was the leader and follower interview and paper. I was well aware of the due date, but I decided to wait until the last minute to begin the paper. On the day before the paper was due, I was faced with an ethical dilemma. I wasn't sure who to interview at the time, so I debated the thought of making up an interview. Thankfully, one of my co-chairs called me and it clicked that I could just use people involved in Fish Camp. I'm glad I ultimately made the correct decision because if not, I would have risked my grade and would have had guilty conscience the whole time. Also, your actions speak for who you are as a person, especially in the real world. (39MYE)

The students applied the leadership concepts, and in doing so, searched for understanding.

Reflective writing served as the vehicle for the application of the leadership concepts, and it was:

[a]... learning tool to help me in understanding all different leadership concepts... I searched for understanding by putting myself in the shoes of the leaders and the followers. This understanding allowed me to realize that each individual is completely different, and I believe that is what truly makes our society unique. (16FYA)

Another student wrote:

Because of reflective writing, I had a better understanding of the leadership concepts. By applying it to my everyday life, I had to break down the information and try to focus on it one aspect at a time. By doing this, I noticed that any information that was not clear at the time, cleared up once I applied it to my everyday life or some situation that I thought about. I believe that if this process was done on more of a daily basis with everyone we could truly see what we have accomplished over our life. (61MYE)

Another student who was always searching for understanding said:

The act of reflecting daily gave me an opportunity to make the concepts my own and therefore they were not just memorized, but learned forever... This assignment kept me concentrating on the question, "Why this matters to me?" I always saw the bottom line of each leadership concepts, increasing my understanding of the material. (62MYA)

All in all, reflective writing incorporated within the Experiential Learning Cycle provided a gateway for understanding. As one student eloquently wrote, “I feel like I understand leadership on a deeper level since I was taking notes, writing a daily journal, [and] then performing the many different activities that we did daily in class” (13FYA).

D2—Interest as a Driver for Approach to Study/Learning

The second category was interest as a driver for approach to study/learning. Interest served as motivator for the students to adopt a deep approach to learning, as said by the oldest member of the class, “Coming back to school has been an interesting experience and one I would not trade. My interest in learning is increasing daily, and I want to really learn the leadership concepts” (14MOA). Another student wrote, “After class, I pondered the concepts more to see if there was anything that I might wanted to add, as opposed to just forgetting, or only remembering the concepts for the test” (36FYE).

Within the students’ reflective journals and papers, they included how experiential learning sparked their interest in approaching learning in a deep manner.

One student wrote:

I learned a lot from this class and ENJOYED it! I hope we will all become better leaders thanks to this informative class. I liked the way we had to get involved in the class discussions and group exercises. I believed this involvement helped with clarifying any questions we had about the subject. I had a blast, and I will use my knowledge, because I will remember most of everything I learned, in my future plans! (30FYE)

Another student wrote, “Because of the class structure of ALED 340, I was interested and motivated to learn the leadership concepts for more than the test. I learned them for life” (51FYA)!

Within experiential learning, reflective writing was integral to the enthusiasm exhibited by the students. Reflective writing:

...helped me retain information, sparked my interest in the course, and prepared me for the future. It was almost a psyche of the mind...I looked forward to observing the events happening around me, in hopes of finding something to write about in my journal. Because of my interest in the reflective journal, I was a better student. (39MYE)

Another student wrote:

Keeping a journal raised my interest level for this course. I am considering keeping a journal for my life, so that I can build on what I learn each day and become a better person. I want to approach my life with enthusiasm, learning from my mistakes. (22FOE)

Another student wrote about the enjoyment she received from writing the reflective journals. She said, “I enjoyed keeping the journal and the opportunities it afforded me in reviewing what I learned in class and it gave me a chance to really think about how leadership has and is affecting me life” (36FYE).

Interest in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* served as a motivator for the students. One student wrote:

I am thoroughly motivated with what I have learned. It gives me a sense of confidence and knowledge that I have never had before...I can now go on to be a better role model for my son, friends, and family to follow. (46MYA)

Another student wrote:

This class has been very interesting to me. The plans I have for my future are very important to me and this class has helped me to see how, as a leader, I should try to start developing myself so as to be most effective. (26MYE)

A student with the desire to learn and grow said, “This class served as a motivator to change some of the skills I have as a student in hopes of becoming a concerned learner instead of one who cares only about what is on the test” (59MYE). Overall, the students in interest in the leadership topics served as a motivator for them to approach learning in a deep manner.

D3—Attempt to Link Knowledge/Theory to Experience, Real World Situations

The third category was the students attempt to link knowledge/theory to experience. As said by one student, the information that was presented in the classroom contained “...knowledge that [was] actually applicable and useful in the real world” (2MOA). The students not only understood the leadership concepts, but they were able to apply the concepts to their daily lives at home, work, and at school. One student commented about a current situation occurring at her home. She said:

Knowing that the United States is a democratic type leadership, makes me want to vote more and have my voice heard. I live with four girls (there is 5 of us total), and it is “illegal” to have more than four non-related people living under the same roof together, which I don’t think is fair. Now, the city is trying to make it that only 2 non-related people can live together in order to “cut down on parties.” I am definitely going to vote against this bill, especially since I think that only allowing two people to live together will increase parties! Also, many college students would not be able to afford that, while I also feel it isn’t constitutional. (8FYE)

Another student made a comment regarding a job interview. He said:

Today, I had a job interview that tested my abilities to cope with certain situations by adapting to different scenarios. Similarly to the path-goal theory, I explained my behavior of my approach would depend on the situation. I was given the example of having a coworker that didn’t agree with my decision making. Obviously, a directive leadership behavior wouldn’t be the appropriate one to choose, instead a more participative behavior is best in order to invite others into the planning and decision-making. (39MYE)

One student connected the Leader-Member Exchange Theory to the classroom dynamics within ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*:

Take our class for example. I feel like the front two tables are more of the in-group because we always take part in discussing while the back two tables just listen. There is nothing wrong with either, it just shows the differences. If the teacher is asking a question, she is more than likely expecting the front two tables to talk. (6MYE)

The students were able to apply the leadership concepts learned in the classroom to their lives and past experiences. One student wrote, “This course made some situations that happened at my previous job make more sense” (24FYA). Another student commented about a leader whom she had admired at her previous job. She said:

We discussed servant leadership today. One of the best supervisors that I have ever had used this type of leadership. I worked harder for him than I have ever worked for any other supervisor because I did not want him to have to set aside time to help me. I would work hard to get my job finished so that I could help him with his. I would help him with his job because I knew he would do the same for me. If I am ever in a leadership position, I hope to use this style of leadership. I think for the most part it is good as long as you do not let people take advantage of you. (27FOA)

A student, who was always searching for more knowledge, applied the Situational Leadership Model to her collegiate experience. She said:

My college career has followed the pattern of follower development. My first year here I didn’t know what I was doing but I was determined to succeed. Then, the following two years I wasn’t sure if I wanted to continue although I knew more what to do. Now, I am highly motivated to finish and know exactly what to do. In each of these stages, I would naturally seek out leaders that would match where I was and would be the most effective. (36FYE)

Each of these students applied the leadership concepts to their past experiences.

The students were able to apply the concepts to their present lives. For example, one student wrote, “I would go home and watch my Dad at the shop, and I would see the

different thing[s] that we did in class. This was cool because I saw it in everyday terms”

(10MYE). Another student wrote:

One of the things that I learned during class was that there should not necessarily be a bad connotation with being in the out-group in a working environment. I always thought that a person should strive to be in the in-group, but this is not always possible. I have worked on campus for almost ten years now and I have experienced my turn in both the in-group and the out-group. In my current job, I would probably be considered to fit in the out-group because I take care of my job, but after I get off work I usually have to go take care of my homework. I have learned this is not bad, just necessary. (27FOA)

These students applied the concepts to their present lives, and in the words of another student, “It was one thing for me to have an idea of these concepts, but it is a whole other thing to have a real understanding of them and know how to incorporate them into my life” (37FOE).

Other students wrote about how the leadership concepts would be useful for future endeavors. As one student said:

Another skill learned in ALED 340 was teamwork. All of our activities were group based, which will be invaluable in the workplace because working within teams is a reality in the current business environment. ...the ability to work well with others is not only applicable to business; these skills will be transferable to our personal lives... (14MOA)

Another student commented on the applicability of the leadership concepts for many years to come. He said, “I absolutely have taken so much information out of this class that will help me 1, 5, 10, [and] 30 years down the road (9MYA).”

D4—Sought Connections Between Different Elements of Disciplinary Knowledge/Theory

The fourth category that arose from the students’ reflective writings was how the students sought connections between different elements of disciplinary knowledge/

theory. One student connected many leadership concepts into her definition of leadership. She said:

Before entering this class, I would have defined leadership as a means of raising morale and motivating a group in a non-coercive manner to accomplish a goal. However, in reflection explain leadership as a 'process', as defined in the book, is more fitting. It is evident that building relationships with followers, which, like building any relationship, is time consuming and involves stages of progress—lending itself to be a 'process'. Also, leading in different situations requires different styles, as is explained by the situational leadership theory. It only seems natural that the adaptation of style occurs in a 'process' under which the situation is analyzed and the appropriate style is determined and enacted. However, effective leadership involves a 'process' that delves far deeper. It is a 'process' a leader must undergo in constantly remaking himself to be the best that he can. I believe that the most effective leaders are those who lead by example. No person is without flaws, and, as a leader it is inevitable that those flaws will be exposed. When these flaws arise, and mistakes are made, an effective leader must accept responsibility for those mistakes and make the appropriate corrections. Furthermore, she must undergo a 'process' of change. (38FYE)

Another student connected many of the leadership concepts to herself as a future leader in the workforce. She said:

This course has given me valuable insight and priceless tools that will assist me in becoming a better, more effective leader. With my understanding of the trait approach, I can recognize my future employee's leadership traits. By applying the situational leadership approach, I can be a better, more effective leader to those employees. In conclusion, the Tuckman's Model of Team Development will create a work atmosphere where all team members feel appreciated and welcomed. It is of most importance that I, as a future leader, maintain a reputation of excellence and continue to live my life with integrity. (66FOE)

These two students saw leadership in the big picture and were able to connect the various leadership concepts.

How Learning was Maximized

The third theme that arose from the students' reflective journals and papers included how learning was maximized as a result of experiential learning. There

included three categories within this theme: retention, internalization, and transformation.

Retention

The first category that arose from the students' reflective writing included how experiential learning was conducive to the students' ability to retain the leadership concepts. As one student said, "I did not forget the concepts as soon as I walked out the door..." (49FYA). In the words of another student, "[I was] able to remember not just for tests, but for life" (59MYE). Remember was a common word included in the students' reflective writing. One student eloquently wrote, "I believe the key difference between memory and reflection is getting something out of it. I could "re"-member what I wrote about leadership during the summer session, or I could try and get something out of those memories—reflection" (50MYE). Another student wrote about how the teaching strategies associated with experiential learning helped her remember the leadership concepts. She said, "[Experiential learning] helped me [to] remember the material longer" (25FYA). In another student's reflective journal, he said, "I am happy to say I will remember all of this throughout the coming years" (9MYA).

Experiential learning helped the students relate the leadership concepts to their lives, increasing retention. In the words of one student, "What used to be in the back of my mind and I had to think about...are now like second nature to me" (35MYE).

Another student wrote:

This way of learning forced you to think about what you were saying and put it on paper how it could be used. This has made the learning process easier for me I feel because when you visualize yourself doing something I think it makes it easier to actually get there and fulfill your dream. (52MYA)

Reflective writing, as a component of experiential learning, was instrumental in the retention of the leadership concepts. One student said, “I feel that writing helped me to remember things I had enjoyed and learned from prior days and this helped me to study for the test because I made connections with each subject already and just needed to refresh” (22FOE). The oldest student in the class felt that experiential learning required “students [to] make more of an effort to learn something daily” (19FOE).

Internalization

The second category that arose from the students’ reflective journals included the internalization of the leadership concepts. This allowed the students to become more aware of themselves as individuals and as leaders. Experiential methods with an emphasis on reflective writing allowed the students to “internalize [the leadership concepts] and see [their] strengths and weaknesses as leaders. It allowed [them] to grow (29FOA).” Grow was a common word among other students’ reflective journals and papers. Another student said, “This class has been a valuable experience for my...personal growth (14MOA).” Keeping with the word grow, another student said, “Having this class has taught me to evaluate every situation around me and grow from them (19FOE).”

Within the internalization theme, students wrote in their journals how ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* helped them to find themselves. One student wrote:

When the end of the day is near, I begin to look back at what I have done, achieved, or what I need to improve. I look at my reflective journal and notes

from class and absorb as much as I can. This class has been a guiding light for me to follow while I was in the dark looking for answers. (46MYA)

Another student wrote, “This class has taught me a lot about myself. Who I am and why, who I want to be, and who I am capable of being (37FOE).”

Other students internalized the leadership concepts, allowing them to grow as leaders. One student wrote, “The plans I have for my future are very important to me and this class has helped me to see how, as a leader, I should try to start developing myself so as to best be effective” (26MYE). Another student said, “I am not a leader by accomplishing my goal of graduating from college, but I am a leader for taking what I have learned in school and putting it to use in the real world (48MYA).”

Transformation

As a result of a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning, the third theme that maximized learning included transformation. One student voiced her opinion by saying “...my knowledge and perception of leadership has changed (66FOA).” Another student said, “I must admit I have always been very set in my ways and not very open to change. After taking this class, I have a few things in mind I want to try (13FYA).” The oldest student in the class commented, “Change is the only constant the students will face in their careers, and the more adept they are to adapting to change, the more rewarding and fulfilling their jobs will be (14MOA).”

In the students’ reflective journals and papers, they discussed how they understood the true meaning of their past experiences and why they acted the way they

did. The students also determined if they needed to transform or change their previous interpretations. For example, one student said:

I am a very loud and outgoing person who tends to dictate tasks and can unintentionally overlook possible solutions proposed by others. Although my style of leadership can be very helpful and effective in some situations, in others it has the opposite effect. Identifying what type of group I would be best suited to lead will enable me to capitalize on my strengths. Regardless of the cost of being a great leader, I plan to dedicate my life on learning to accept that responsibility. (18FYE)

This student questioned situations in her past, and ultimately, realized the leadership situations in which she would excel, avoiding the situations in which she would not excel. She critically reflected upon the experiences, and transformed her way of viewing the experiences. Another student experienced the same epiphany:

In class, we did a game about what color you are, and I chose the color green, meaning organized. It was right on key that I am not good at letting other people help when I am a leader because I think I can do it better, and that my way is right. In order to be a better leader, I need to allow myself to develop the leadership skills so I can overcome my selfishness and grow into a leader others want to work under. I want to strive to be the colors red, yellow, and blue, as well as green. They all have their positives and negatives, but I want to be more open to different people and their different leadership abilities. (8FYE)

Other students reached the same conclusion. One young man who is involved with collegiate athletics said:

Before taking this class, I had my own views and opinions about what I thought leadership was and the true purpose of a positive functioning team. After taking this course, I learned the true meaning of how teams are developed, put together and ran and managed effectively. (52MYA)

Another student said:

One area I realized I need to work on is finding the right way to motivate my followers and not to reach for coercion. My dad used coercion or punishment with me when I was younger and I think that is why I tend to default to it. Now, I

can see that if I had tried a rewards based system, I would have had happier and more motivated followers in certain situations. (29FOA)

Each of these students critically reflected upon situations in the past and made changes for the future.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The Literature

The theoretical framework serving as a basis for this study consisted of three components. The first component was experiential learning. Experiential learning, as defined by Luckmann (1996), is “a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experience” (p. 7). Experiential learning is an active component in the repertoires of many college instructors. The best-known father of experiential learning, and the first to place the experience in learning, was Dewey (Roberts, 2006). Dewey (1938) philosophized “everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had” (p. 27). True learning is the result of students’ experiences, and the evaluation and reflection of these experiences. New thoughts and ideas are formed as a result of the reflection of these experiences, thus building new concepts based upon past experiences (Arnold, Warner, & Osborne, 2006).

Another significant thinker and contributor to experiential learning is Kolb. Kolb’s experiential learning theory defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). In Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle, the learner utilizes two strategies for grasping experiences—Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and the learner utilizes two strategies for transforming experiences—Reflective Observation

(RO) and Active Experimentation (AE) (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2000).

Essentially, the learner involves himself or herself in a personal experience, which serves as the basis for observations and reflections (experience). The learner actively reflects upon the experience to determine its true meaning (observation), and he or she formulates the observations and reflections into a theory or concept (conceptualization). Active experimentation allows the learner to test the theory, thus leading to new experiences. The Experiential Learning Cycle begins anew (Svinicki & Dixon, 1987).

The second component of the theoretical framework that served as a basis for this study was reflection, and more importantly, critical reflection as a component of transformative learning. Reflection, or reflective thought, as defined by Dewey (1910), is the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 6). A valuable experience is without meaning unless the experience is carefully considered. Reflection is key. It allows students to make the connection between theory and practice and allows the principles learned in the classroom to be applied to their daily lives. Student learning is deepened and strengthened when the abstract becomes the concrete (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). Reflection can provide a gateway to the students’ outside lives, where the concepts come alive in the most usual of places for them. For a student to actually think, he or she is mentally engaged and ready to learn.

Reflective learning, as defined by Boyd and Fales (1983), is “the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience,

which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective” (p. 100). Reflection is essential to learning from experience, and it is the “core difference between whether a person repeats the same experience several times” (Boyd & Fales, 1983, p. 100). Reflection helps the individual travel from a destination of uncertainty to a field of clarity (Dewey, 1910). The role of reflection, as defined in the context of learning, serves as a “bridge between experience and theory” (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999, p. 180). Through reflective learning, student learning is deepened and strengthened (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999).

More importantly, it is paramount in adult education to develop the learners’ ability to critically reflect, where learners understand the meaning of their experiences (Mezirow, 1981). Critical reflection is not concerned with the how, but with the why or, more specifically, the “awareness of why we attach the meanings we do to reality” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 11). Critical reflection is an essential component of transformative learning for adults (Mezirow, 1998). Transformative learning is the “process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). Transformative learning involves “learning how we are caught in our own history and reliving it” (Mezirow, 1978, p. 101). Transformative learning helps adult learners develop autonomous thinking (Mezirow, 1997). Below is an example of transformative learning:

A housewife goes to secretarial school in the evening and finds to her amazement that the other women do not have to rush home to cook dinner for their husbands as she does. Perspective transformations may occur through an accretion of such transformed meaning schemes. As a result of the transformation of several specific meaning schemes connected with her role as the traditional housewife, she comes to question her own identity as predicated upon previously assumed

sex stereotypes. (Mezirow, 1990, p. 13)

Learners' experiences may be transformed through the critical reflection of those experiences.

The last and final component of the theoretical framework that served as a basis for this study was the concept of student approaches to learning (SAL). In the pivotal, groundbreaking work of Marton and Saljo (1976a & 1976b), the idea of how students approach learning was introduced. In this research study, Swedish students were asked to read a selected passage. The students were then asked specific questions regarding the passage, and more importantly, the students were asked how they went about reading the selected passage. Lastly, the students were given a series of questions that analyzed their depth of understanding about the passage (Marton & Saljo, 1976a). From the data collected, it was concluded that different students set about learning in different ways. From the students' interviews, two distinctly different levels of processing, or the ways the students set about learning, were identified: deep-level processing and surface-level processing (Marton & Saljo, 1976a).

Students who take a deep approach to learning are interested in understanding the meaning of what is being taught. They "personalize the task, making it meaningful to [their] own experience[s] and to the real world" (Biggs, 1987a, p. 15). The students' words provided meaning to deep-level processing, with their comments illustrating their approach to learning. One student said, "...I tried to look for...you know, the principal idea...". The student further commented, "What was the point of the article, you know" (Marton & Saljo, 1976a, p. 9). The students who took a deep approach to learning

concentrated “on what [was] signified” (Marton & Saljo, 1976a, p. 7). The most important element in the characterization of a deep approach to learning is the aspect of the students’ search for understanding. The students do not just learn the facts, but they also learn the meaning of the facts. The students who take a deep approach to learning are able to apply what they learned in classroom to their daily lives, and this is illustrated by one student’s words, “...then to learn...implies being able to make use of what you know” (Saljo, 1979a, p. 449).

Real learning or understanding is compared with rote learning or students who take a surface approach to learning. Students who take a surface approach to learning are focused on “learning the text itself, i. e., [they] have a ‘reproductive’ conception of learning which means that [they] are more or less forced to keep to a rote-learning strategy” (Marton & Saljo, 1976a, p. 7). Some students, who approach learning with the idea of learning the information for the test and only for the test, see the task as a “demand to be met, a necessary imposition if some other goal is to be reached” (Biggs, 1987a, p. 15). The following student’s words characterized a surface approach to learning. “Well, I just concentrated on trying to remember as much as possible. I remembered...but, I’d sort of memorized everything I’d read...no, not everything, but more or less” (Marton & Saljo, 1976a, p. 9). The students who take a surface approach to learning are not aiming to remember the information presented in the classroom for life, but they are, rather, aiming at remembering the information for the test, and for the test only.

Based on the theoretical framework, the following research questions guided this study:

Question 1: As a result of a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning, were the students utilizing a deep approach or surface approach to learning?

Question 2: What were the students' perceptions of experiential learning?

Question 3: What were the indicators of a deep approach to learning as evidenced by the students' reflective writing?

Question 4: How was learning maximized through a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning?

By having a systematic and persistent understanding of how a student-centered leadership education course with an emphasis on experiential learning affects student approaches to learning, college instructors can become aware of the positive effects of experiential learning when used in a college agricultural leadership education course. Research has shown that college agricultural professors typically do not teach with the thought of promoting critical thinking in their students (Cano & Martinez, 1991; Whittington, 1995), and the way a college instructor teaches influences how his or her students learn (Trigwell et al., 1999). If college agricultural professors are not teaching with the thought of promoting critical thinking in their students, the students are not typically thinking critically (Cano & Martinez, 1991; Whittington, 1995). College instructors have been accused of not encouraging students to think, where the students are only vessels needing to be filled with the knowledge and facts deemed necessary by

the instructor. Whereas, reflective writing encourages students to think, making the student more than a vessel needing to be filled. The student is an individual thinker, whose thoughts and ideas are important to the class and the material being taught in the class.

Research Design

The sample of the study consisted of all students enrolled in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*, Section's 901 and 902, during the five-week Summer I Session of 2008 at Texas A&M University. The sample consisted of 66 students, 35 students within Section 901 and 31 students within Section 902. The enrolled students were mostly junior or senior level students. The sample was a purposive sample, or a sample "based upon the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). The sample was selected because of the classification, junior or senior, of the students and the hope that the students were interested in the material being learned and found the material relevant to their current and future lives. Also, the timing of the course was relevant to sample. The study was performed in the summer, where the researcher observed the students daily for five weeks. The researcher had prolonged engagement with the students.

This study incorporated procedures and protocols associated with mixed-methods research. The first research question was answered using procedures associated with the quantitative design. The students were given the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire on the first day a classroom instruction, prior to the intervention. The

students were also given the same questionnaire upon completion of the class, after the intervention. The intervention consisted of teaching strategies associated with experiential learning with an emphasis on reflective writing. The students' self-reported answers to the questionnaire were analyzed using the dependent t test to determine if their pre-intervention scores for the Deep Approach Scale were significantly different from their post-intervention scores for the Deep Approach Scale. The students' self-reported answers to the questions incorporated within the Surface Approach Scale were also analyzed to determine if a significant difference existed within the scores. The demographic variables—gender, age or life experiences, and major—were of interest to the researcher. Each demographic variable was analyzed with the Deep Approach Scale and the Surface Approach Scale, producing six two-way ANOVAs.

The last three questions were answered using procedures associated with the qualitative paradigm. Each day following classroom instruction, the students were asked to write in their reflective journal. Upon completion of the course, the students were asked to prepare a comprehensive reflective paper. Both the students' reflective journals and reflective papers were submitted to the primary researcher, where the papers were analyzed for common themes. The data analysis technique used was constant analysis (Merriam, 1998).

Findings and Conclusions

Question 1

As a result of a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning, were the students utilizing a deep approach or surface approach to learning?

The students' pre-intervention scores for the Deep Approach Scale were statistically similar to the students' post-intervention scores for the Deep Approach Scale, concluding that experiential learning with an emphasis on reflective writing did not have an effect on students approaching learning in a deep manner. The students' pre-intervention scores for the Surface Approach Scale were statistically similar to the students' post-intervention scores for the Surface Approach Scale as well, concluding that experiential learning with an emphasis on reflective writing did not have an effect on students approaching learning in a surface manner. Statistically speaking, the mean scores for both of the scales (Deep Approach Scale—Pre-Intervention – 28.42, Post-Intervention – 28.88; Surface Approach Scale—Pre-Intervention – 26.08, Post-Intervention – 27.11) were statistically similar. As an important side note, the mean scores for the Deep Approach scale were higher than the means scores for the Surface Approach scale both pre-intervention and post-intervention.

From previous research (Leung & Kember, 2003; Phan, 2006; Phan, 2007), a significant relationship did exist between reflection and student approaches to learning. In these studies, students who took a surface approach to learning were engaged in a non-reflective action, habitual action, where “no attempt is being made to understand the

contents acquired” (Phan, 2007, p. 800). Students who took a deep approach to learning were engaged in either the non-reflective action’s thoughtful action (understanding) or introspection (reflection) or the reflective action, critical reflection (Leung & Kember, 2003; Phan, 2006; Phan, 2007). These students were seeking to understand the material presented in the classroom.

In the present study, the researcher determined if experiential learning, and more importantly, reflective writing affected student approaches to learning. The researcher did not seek to find a correlation between the two constructs. The present study concluded that experiential learning did not affect student approaches to learning as measured by the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire. There are several potential reasons why a causal relationship did not exist. To begin with, the researcher did not utilize the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire correctly. The researcher should have asked the students to complete the questionnaire about their approach to studying regarding ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*, instead of asking the students about their approach to studying in general. Biggs, Kember, and Leung (2001) said:

We believe that this revised two-factor version of the SPQ will be an ideal tool for teachers to use in evaluating and researching their own classrooms. In this case, it is useful to indicate in the preliminary instructions that you want your students to reply in connection with the particular course, module, or program in question, rather than to studying generally. (p. 145)

Secondly, too many extraneous variables existed that the researcher could not account for in the design of the study. Many of the students were enrolled in other courses while being a student in ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*.

These other courses could have potentially influenced the students' answers to the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire. The researcher worked hard to keep everything the same for both sections of the course, but in reality, each class had different dynamics, making it a different experience for every section.

Another potential reason why a causal relationship did not exist between experiential learning and student approaches to learning included the timing of the study. The sample was chosen purposively for the summer, whereby the researcher had prolonged engagement with the students. The researcher saw the students four days each of the five weeks; however, it is hard to measure change within students in such a short period of time.

Each demographic variable—gender, age or life experiences, and major—was measured with the Deep Approach Scale and the Surface Approach Scale. When gender was measured with the Deep Approach Scale, there was not a significant interaction, nor was there a significant difference between gender and within the Deep Approach Scale. When gender was measured with the Surface Approach Scale, there was not a significant interaction, nor was there a significant difference between gender and within the Surface Approach Scale. Previous research does not use gender in conjunction with the students' self-reported answers to the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire. This study supports that gender is not a factor of concern when dealing with student approaches to learning.

When age was measured with the Deep Approach Scale, there was not a significant interaction, nor was there a significant difference between age and within the

Deep Approach Scale. When age was measured with the Surface Approach Scale, there was not a significant interaction, nor was there a significant difference between age and within the Surface Approach Scale. Other researchers have recorded a significant difference between age and within the Deep Approach Scale (Richardson, 1994a; Richardson, 1994b; Richardson, 1995; Saljo, 1979a). Mature students are more likely to adopt a deep approach to learning, in relation to their younger counterparts, concluding that age, and the before-mentioned life experiences, is a factor associated with student approaches to learning (Richardson, 1994a; Richardson, 1994b; Richardson, 1995). The older students' scores for the Deep Approach Scale may not have been statistically different post-intervention from their pre-intervention scores because of the small sample size of the older, more experienced students in the present study. There were only 16 older, more experienced students in the present study.

When major was measured with the Deep Approach Scale, there was not a significant interaction, nor was there a significant difference between majors and within the Deep Approach Scale. When major was measured with the Surface Approach Scale, there was not a significant interaction, nor was there a significant difference between majors and within the Surface Approach Scale. In previous research, how students approach learning does not remain constant among different disciplines and different academic departments (Entwistle & Tait, 1990; Ramsden, 1979; Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981). Thus, "students' approaches to learning can then be seen, in part at least, as reactions to the environment provided by the department" (Entwistle & Tait, 1990, p. 190). Within ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*, there were students

who were Agricultural Leadership and Development majors, but there were also many students from various other majors within the university. These students' scores were statistically similar for the Deep Approach Scale and the Surface Approach Scale. A potential reason for the lack of significant difference within their scores was the students were all taking the same class and receiving the same instruction. Their major was not a factor.

Question 2

What were the students' perceptions of experiential learning?

The students' comments in their reflective journals and papers supported the four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle. The four stages are as follows: Concrete Experiences, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. Dixon (1987) said, "By constructing learning sequences that lead students through the full cycle, an instructor should be able to foster a more complete learning than can be gained from a single perspective" (p. 142). The instructor for ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development* did construct learning sequences that supported the four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle, whereby upholding the premise of experiential learning.

It can be concluded that teaching to all four learning styles and incorporating all four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle is important for college instructors because it involves students with various learning preferences in the college classroom experience. Moreover, it can be concluded that the utilization of all the stages of the

Experiential Learning Cycle increased students' retention of the knowledge presented in the classroom. Stice (1987) supports these conclusions of the present study and says:

20% is retained if only Abstract Conceptualization is used; if both Reflective Observation and Abstract Conceptualization are used, retention is increased to 50%; if one uses concrete experience, reflective observation, and abstract conceptualization, it rises to 70%; 90% is retained if all four learning stages are employed. (p. 293)

This was evidenced in the students' writings and the quality of their assignments.

Bonwell and Eison (1991) believe "students must do more than just listen. They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems" (p. iii). More importantly, students involved in all four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle will have more highly developed thinking and problem-solving skills (Brock & Cameron, 1999). All in all, the utilization of the Experiential Learning Cycle increased benefits to the students involved with its incorporation into the classroom.

Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime. Through the incorporation of a reflective journal and paper the students, metaphorically speaking, were taught how to fish. The students not only listened, but they also read, wrote, and were mentally engaged with the leadership concepts. The classroom activities upheld the premise of experiential learning and worked to "change the student who is inactively...sitting in class taking notes and receiving information without thinking or learning very much, into an actively involved student who is mentally engaged and a participant in the learning process" (Brock & Cameron, 1999, p. 254).

When students enter a classroom, they bring with them prior life experiences. These life experiences vary from student to student, and the teaching strategies associated with experiential learning helps the students relate their own individual life experiences with the same leadership concepts taught in the classroom. The concepts take on a life of their own with each and every student. Reflection completes the learning process. A valuable experience is without meaning unless the experience is carefully considered for its true worth. Reflection is key. It allows students to make the connection between theory and practice and allows the principles learned in the classroom to be applied to their daily lives. Student learning is deepened and strengthened when the abstract becomes the concrete (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). Reflection provides a gateway to the students' outside lives, where the concepts come alive in the most usual of places for them. For a student to actually think, he or she is mentally engaged and ready to learn.

Question 3

What were the indicators of a deep approach to learning as evidenced by the students' reflective writing?

Kennelly and Magin (2002) interviewed 14 students and identified five indicators of a deep approach to learning. The indicators of a deep orientation by the students were as follows:

- D1 search for understanding,
- D2 interest as driver for approach to study/learning,
- D3 attempts to link knowledge/theory to experience, real world situations,
- D4 seeks connections between different elements of disciplinary knowledge/theory, and
- D5 explores subject beyond syllabus specifications. (Kennelly & Magin, 2002,

p. 3)

Students who classify learning in any one or combination thereof are approaching learning in a deep fashion.

The researcher used the above mentioned guideline in searching for indicators of students approaching learning in a deep manner. Of the five indicators mentioned above, the first four were present in the students' reflective journals and papers. One or any combination the first four indicators were present in all of the students' reflective writing, whereby each student approached learning in a deep manner to a certain extent. The students were searching for understanding or the true meaning when writing in their journals. Despite the current findings regarding the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire, the students did approach learning in a deep manner. The act of critically reflecting, along with the assignments and the teaching strategies associated with experiential learning, produced an environment conducive to the students taking a deep approach to learning.

Question 4

How was learning maximized through a student-centered agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning?

The third theme that arose from the students' reflective journals and papers was how learning was maximized because of experiential learning. Experiential learning helped the students in the retention of the material presented in the classroom. The abstract became the concrete and allowed the students to place the leadership concepts into terms they understood. The students began to wonder and to think about leadership

many times during the day and saw leadership in places they would have never imagined. This connection increased retention as indicated in the students' reflective writing, where the students remembered the concepts for more than the test.

The second category that arose from the students' reflective writing was the internalization of the leadership concepts. The students became aware of themselves as leaders and as individuals. Because of experiential learning methods utilized in the classroom, they internalized the leadership concepts, making them their own. The internalization of the leadership concepts allowed the students to grow and recognize themselves for the people they are and they will be. It can be concluded that experiential learning methods are effective and increased the students' internalization of the leadership concepts.

It can also be concluded that experiential learning methods results in transformation. Transformative learning is the "process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). Learners' experiences may be transformed through the critical reflection of those experiences. In the students' reflective journal and papers, they thought about previous experiences, examining them in a new light. They revised their interpretations of the events, and ultimately, made a decision to change or transform their way of thinking.

Recommendations

The United States of America provides the benefits of a college education to the broadest segment of people, where a degree in higher education is an attainable goal for

most (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 2000). Furthermore, institutions of higher learning are committed to providing a better America through the growth and development of people yearning to learn more, go further, and better themselves for the good of themselves and society. Within these colleges and universities, instructors struggle with the true meaning of good teaching. Instructors yearn to provide the best service to their students. Should instructors adhere to traditional modes of teaching, where the acquisition of knowledge is the most important goal of education? Or, should instructors, instead, go beyond these traditional modes and work to incorporate more active learning strategies within their classrooms? The results of this study cannot be generalized to whole population of agricultural leadership educators; however, the results do indicate that teaching strategies associated with experiential learning with an emphasis on reflective writing does enhance student learning, where the students search for understanding. Because leadership is such an abstract concept, experiential learning methods that include critical reflection make leadership become more concrete in the minds of the students.

This study incorporated experiential learning strategies within the course, ALED 340: *Professional Leadership Development*. The instructor struggled to actively engage her students, allowing the students to become active participants in their own education. Through the incorporation of reflective journals and comprehensive papers, the instructor was able to determine the effectiveness of such strategies in linking leadership to life, in light of the students' own individual life experiences. The instructor was also able to determine the importance of reflection in the college classroom.

This study was a quest to improve student learning, and from this quest, several recommendations can be made. To begin with, several students critically reflected upon the leadership concepts, and ultimately, decided to transform or change their way of thinking about and viewing certain aspects of leadership. To truly be successful and to ultimately know if transformative learning is occurring within the students, future research must be performed on the long-term effects of critical reflection. Are the students actually incorporating the changes within their lives? A follow-up study is needed to determine if the students in this study made the transformations as mentioned in their reflective writings. Saying they are transforming means nothing unless they are actually doing what they are saying.

Secondly, it is recommended that the same study or a similar version of the study be performed in the regular 15-week semester. It is very hard to measure change when performing the study in a five-week summer session, and performing the study during the regular school year may show change better. Potentially, performing the study over the course of several years would be even more beneficial. A researcher could follow the same students from the beginning of their freshman until they graduate to determine if the way they approach learning changes.

The last recommendations are made in conjunction with the design of the quantitative portion of the study. The revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire was given to the students to measure how they approach learning. Was the questionnaire an accurate evaluator of how the students approach learning, or is there a better questionnaire? Can a future researcher develop a questionnaire that is better suited for

evaluating student approaches to learning? Lastly, in the design of the present study, experiential learning was used in conjunction with reflective writing. If the students' self-reported responses to the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire would have shown a significant difference in the scores pre-intervention to post-intervention for the Deep Approach Scale, the researcher would not have known what caused the increase in students approaching learning in a deep manner. Was it experiential learning? Was it reflective writing, or was it a combination of both? Future studies should lend themselves to more of a quasi-experiential design, where you have a multitude of classes. One class could be the control, where the students in this class would not receive any of the treatment, i.e. teaching strategies associated with experiential learning and reflective writing. Other classes would receive combinations of the treatment. One of the treatment classrooms would receive teaching strategies associated with experiential learning and no reflective writing. Another of the treatment classes would receive reflective writing and no teaching strategies associated with experiential learning. The last treatment classroom would receive both teaching strategies associated with experiential learning and reflective writing. Hopefully, through the incorporation of a quasi-experimental design, the researcher will determine what specifically causes an increase in the students approaching learning in a deep manner.

Recommendations for Practice

Based upon the findings and the conclusions of this study, the researcher recommends that agricultural leadership educators incorporate teaching strategies associated with experiential learning within their classrooms. The educators should

incorporate teaching strategies associated with each of the four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle, in an attempt to reach the learning styles of each and every student. The inclusion of many different teaching strategies within the collegiate agricultural leadership classroom allows students to learn in their comfort zone, but it also allows them to step out of their comfort zones and learn in different ways than normal.

Reflective writing, where the students reflect upon the leadership concepts critically, is an integral and necessary component of the Experiential Learning Cycle. Reflective writing is instrumental in allowing the students to approach learning in a deep fashion. The reflective journals should be semi-structured, where the educator provides prompts for the students. These prompts should help the students in understanding how leadership affects their lives. Essentially, these questions should answer the question, “Why does this matter to me?” The students should also have the freedom to express their ideas freely, if they so choose. The students should reflect daily, and the educator must check the students’ reflective journals for progress to ensure the students are completing the assignment as designed and to ensure they are making the leadership connection. In doing the above-mentioned recommendations for practice, agricultural leadership educators can too foster their students taking a deep approach to learning.

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APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES

Day	Leadership Topic	Activity	Objective
1	Leadership Is...	Human Spider Web	To demonstrate the importance of teamwork for the duration of this course
2	Trait Approach; Skills Approach	Personality Profile	To help the students understand themselves so others will understand them
3	Style Approach	Tower Building	To help the students understand leadership behaviors
4	Theory X/Y	Win As Much As You Can	To determine how trust affects leadership; Demonstrate Theory X/Y
5	Power	Unequal Resources	To determine how unequal resources affects power within teams
6	Motivation	What Motivates You?	To help the students determine what motivates them and are they motivated intrinsically or extrinsically
7	Path-Goal Theory	Remember the Titans	To demonstrate the leadership behaviors of the Path-Goal Theory
8	Exam #1		
9	Situational Approach	Learning Community Teaching	To help the students to learn the importance of teamwork through a group project
10	Contingency Theory	Learning Community Teaching	To help the students to learn the importance of teamwork through a group project
11	Leader-Member Exchange Theory	Learning Community Teaching	To help the students to learn the importance of teamwork through a group project
12	Transformational Leadership	Learning Community Teaching	To help the students to learn the importance of teamwork through a group project
13	Team Leadership	Learning Community Teaching	To help the students to learn the importance of teamwork through a group project
14	Exam #2	Carts	To help the students understand the importance of teamwork
15	Servant Leadership	Toxic Waste	To help the students understand servant leadership
16	Ethics	I-Spy	Examine the dynamics of ethical dilemmas
17	Diversity & Culture	Archie Bunker's Neighborhood	To help students understand diversity and culturally sensitive issues
18	Putting It All Together	Balloon Castles	The importance of visioning and teamwork
19	Exam #3		

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF AN ACTIVITY

Tower Building

OBJECTIVES: **TO UNDERSTAND THE STYLE APPROACH AND BLAKE AND MOUTON'S LEADERSHIP GRID**

MATERIALS:	SCRAP PAPER (10)	PENCIL (1)
	TAPE (1 ROLL)	PAPER CUPS (5)
	RUBBER BANDS (10)	PAPER PLATES (5)

DIRECTIONS

- ◆ **DIVIDE THE STUDENTS INTO 4 GROUPS**
- ◆ **HAVE EACH GROUP TO SELECT ONE MEMBER AS THE 'LEADER'**
- ◆ **HAVE EACH GROUP TO SELECT ONE MEMBER AS THE 'OBSERVER'**
- ◆ **EACH GROUP WILL COMPLETE THE TASK OF BUILDING A TOWER AS DIRECTED BY THE LEADER; THE OBSERVER WILL WATCH AND TAKE NOTES**
- ◆ **EACH GROUP WILL HAVE 20 MINUTES TO COMPLETE THE TASK**

FACILITATION QUESTIONS

- ◆ **WHO WAS THE ASSIGNED LEADER? WHO EMERGED AS A LEADER?**
- ◆ **WAS THE LEADER MORE TASK ORIENTED OR RELATIONSHIP ORIENTED? WHERE DID HE OR SHE FALL ON BLAKE AND MOUTON'S LEADERSHIP GRID?**
- ◆ **HOW DID THE GROUP REACT TO EACH OTHER?**

OTHER COMMENTS

- ◆ **THE TOWER MUST BE FREESTANDING**
- ◆ **YOU MAY ONLY USE THE MATERIALS GIVEN TO YOU**

**STYLE 1: THE LEADER IS IN TOTAL COMMAND
AUTHORITY-COMPLIANCE
AUTOCRATIC**

This leader is concerned only with getting the task done and tells the group what to do and how to do it. All policies are determined by the leader whose ideas are the only ones used. Members' ideas are not worth trying.

This leader is not interested in the group members' names or any other personal information about them. He or she is only concerned with getting the job done.

STYLE 2: THE LEADER DIRECTS AFTER ASKING FOR IDEAS
MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD
DEMOCRATIC

This leader believes the group members have some knowledge in how to complete the task and will allow group input. The leader asks the group for ideas, and then he or she picks the idea to use.

This leader is also, somewhat, concerned with building relationships with the team. He or she is equally balanced between task and relationship behaviors.

**STYLE 3: MAKE SURE ALL ARE INVOLVED
TEAM
LAISSEZ-FAIRE**

This leader is concerned equally with the project completion and the involvement of group members. He or she is very interested in the group members as people and will spend much time getting to know them.

The leader will allow the group members to choose which idea they like best regarding how to build their tower, and the group members work with little direction from the leader.

**STYLE 4: LET'S MAKE OUR JOB FUN
COUNTRY CLUB**

This leader is concerned only with developing the social relationships among the members of the group and is concerned little with the completion of the task. The leader, typically, does not care if the job or task at hand is completed. He or she only cares if his or her group members have fun.

APPENDIX C

EXAMPLE OF AN ACTIVITY

Unequal Resources

OBJECTIVES: TO OBSERVE TEAM DYNAMICS WHEN THE TEAMS ARE GIVEN UNEQUAL RESOURCES

MATERIALS: TASK SHEET FOR EACH GROUP; GROUP 4 HAS A TASK SHEET AND ADDITIONAL, CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

DIRECTIONS

- ◆ **DIVIDE THE STUDENTS INTO 4 TEAMS**
- ◆ **PROVIDE EACH TEAM WITH A MATERIALS ENVELOPE AND TASK SHEET**
- ◆ **ASK THE TEAMS TO NOT OPEN THEIR MATERIALS UNTIL THEY ARE TOLD TO BEGIN THE TASK. EXPLAIN THAT EACH GROUP HAS DIFFERENT MATERIALS BUT THAT EACH TEAM MUST COMPLETE THE SAME TASK. THE TEAMS MAY BARGAIN FOR THE USE OF MATERIALS AND TOOLS IN ANY WAY THAT IS MUTUALLY AGREEABLE. THE FIRST TEAM TO COMPLETE THE TASK IS THE WINNER.**
- ◆ **HAVE THE TEAMS TO BEGIN AND WATCH THE GROUP DYNAMICS AND BARGAINING BEHAVIOR EXHIBITED BY EACH TEAM.**
- ◆ **STOP THE PROCESS WHEN THE WINNER HAS BEEN DECLARED.**

FACILITATION QUESTIONS

- ◆ **WHAT WAS THE EFFECT OF THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES ON EACH TEAM'S MORALE?**
- ◆ **DID ANY TEAMS NOT SHARE THEIR MATERIALS? HOW DID OTHER TEAMS TREAT THOSE TEAMS?**
- ◆ **HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FOUND OUT ONE TEAM RECEIVED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?**
- ◆ **IN SOCIETY, WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOME GROUPS ARE GIVEN MORE RESOURCES THAN OTHER GROUPS?**

OTHER COMMENTS

- ◆ **MAKE A BIG PRODUCTION OF DECLARING THE WINNER; TYPICALLY, THE THREE TEAMS WITHOUT THE CONFIDENTIAL**

INFORMATION WILL FINISH FIRST, AND THEY WILL NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THEY DID NOT WIN.

- ◆ **THE TEAMS MAY ONLY USE THE MATERIALS GIVEN TO THEM.**
- ◆ **OBSERVATION BY THE FACILITATOR IS KEY TO OBSERVE THE TEAM DYNAMICS.**
- ◆ **TEAM 1 WILL HAVE THE MOST MATERIALS, AND ONE WOULD THINK THEY WOULD HAVE THE MOST POWER. IN REALITY, GROUP 4, THE GROUP WITH THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BUT THE LEAST AMOUNT OF MATERIALS, HAS THE MOST POWER.**

TEAM 1

5 PAPER CLIPS
1 PENCIL
2 4" SQUARES OF PINK PAPER
2 4" SQUARES OF WHITE PAPER
1 PAIR OF SCISSORS
1 RULER

TEAM 3

1 RED MARKER
1 GREEN MARKER
8 ½ X 11" PAPER
2 GREEN
2 WHITE
2 BLUE
2 PIPE CLEANERS

TEAM 2

1 PAIR OF SCISSORS
1 BOTTLE GLUE
8 ½ X 11" PAPER
2 GREEN
2 WHITE
2 YELLOW
4 PIPE CLEANERS

TEAM 4

8 ½ X 11" PAPER
1 GREEN
1 BLUE
1 YELLOW
1 GOLD
1 PURPLE

UNEQUAL RESOURCES TASK SHEET

EACH TEAM HAS DIFFERENT MATERIALS, BUT EACH TEAM MUST COMPLETE THE SAME TASKS. YOU MAY BARGAIN FOR THE USE OF THE MATERIALS AND TOOLS IN ANY WAY THAT IS MUTUALLY AGREEABLE. THE FIRST TEAM TO COMPLETE ALL THE TASKS CORRECTLY IS THE WINNER!

EACH TEAM IS TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING TASKS. YOU MAY ONLY USE THE MATERIALS SUPPLIED IN YOUR PACKET. YOU MAY NOT USE THE ENVELOPE TO COMPLETE A TASK. IF YOU USE ANY 'ILLEGAL' MATERIALS, YOU MUST START ALL THE TASKS OVER.

- 1. MAKE A 3" X 3" SQUARE OF GREEN PAPER**
- 2. MAKE A 4" X 2" RECTANGLE OF YELLOW PAPER**
- 3. MAKE A SIX-LINK PAPER CHAIN, WITH EACH LINK BEING A DIFFERENT COLOR**
- 4. MAKE A "T" IN WHITE THAT IS 3" X 5"**
- 5. MAKE A 4" X 4" FLAG USING ANY FOUR COLORS AND INCLUDE "HOWDY" AS A PART OF THE FLAG**

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

ONLY YOUR TEAM HAS THIS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. YOU MAY CHOOSE TO USE THIS INFORMATION ANY WAY YOU CHOOSE. BE SURE OTHERS DO NOT SEE THIS INFORMATION UNLESS YOU WANT THEM TO SEE IT.

The 3" X 3" square must include your team members' initials displayed in an artful manner.

APPENDIX D

SYLLABUS

Texas A&M University
Agricultural Leadership and Development 340: Professional Leadership
Development
Section 901

Summer Session I, 2008
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday: 8:00 a.m. – 9:35 a.m.
Scoates Hall 214

Course Description

- ◆ Professional Leadership Development is designed to help you understand the complexity of leadership. Many successful leaders obtain their leadership skills from practice, or in other words, they are socialized into leadership as they have learned from their experiences. However, this course is a collegiate leadership education course where we will study the scholarly discipline of leadership theory.
- ◆ ***This is a writing intensive course.*** You will have the opportunity to improve your overall writing skills over the course of the semester. You can receive additional help from the University Writing Center (UWC), located in Evans Library.
- ◆ 3 credit hours will be given for completion of this course.
- ◆ Prerequisite: Junior or senior classification.

Required Text

Northouse, P. G. (2007). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Course Goals

The goals for students in this course are as follows:

- ◆ Analyze leadership approaches, models, and theories, apply the knowledge learned, and then model the skills learned in your everyday life;
- ◆ Increase written and oral communication skills; and
- ◆ Learn the value of teamwork and emulate it both inside and outside of the classroom.

Our expectations for the students enrolled in this class are as follows:

- ◆ Attend class;
- ◆ Participate; and
- ◆ Complete all required assignments.

Assignments

Guidelines for successfully completing course requirements are as follows:

Assignment	Due	Points
A Leader Defined	May 29, 2008	10
Exam #1	June 9, 2008	25
Learning Community Teaching	June 10, 11, 12, 16, and 17	25
Vision Paper	June 12, 2008	50
Exam #2	June 18, 2008	25
Leader and Follower Interview and Paper	June 23, 2008	60
Exam #3	June 26, 2008	25
Reflective Journal and Reflective Paper	June 26, 2008	100
Attendance and Participation		30
	TOTAL	350

Course Grades will be determined based upon the following grading scale:

313 – 350 total points earned	A
278 – 312 total points earned	B
243 – 277 total points earned	C
208 – 242 total points earned	D
< 208 total points earned	F

Course Outline

Calendar of Topics

The Course Outline is tentative and subject to change depending upon the progress of the class.

Date	Topic
05/27	Introduction (Ch. 1); Introduce—A Leader Defined; Introduce—Reflective Journal and Reflective Paper
05/28	Trait Approach; Skills Approach (Ch. 2 and Ch. 3)
05/29	Theory X/Y; **Due—A Leader Defined**
06/02	Style Approach (Ch. 4)
06/03	Power; Introduce Vision Paper
06/04	Path-Goal Theory (Ch. 7); Other Motivational Theories
06/05	Motivation in Film; Review
06/09	Exam #1; Introduce Leader and Follower Interview and Paper
06/10	Situational Approach (Ch. 5); <i>Learning Community Teaching</i>
06/11	Contingency Theory (Ch. 6); <i>Learning Community Teaching</i>
06/12	LMX Theory (Ch. 8); <i>Learning Community Teaching</i> ; **Due—Vision Paper**
06/16	Transformational Leadership (Ch. 9); <i>Learning Community Teaching</i>
06/17	Team Leadership (Ch. 10); <i>Learning Community Teaching</i> ; Review
06/18	Exam #2
06/19	Servant Leadership
06/23	Ethics (Ch. 14); **Due—Leader and Follower Interview and Paper**
06/24	Delegation; Consensus
06/25	Putting the Pieces Together; Review
06/26	Exam #3; **Due—Reflective Journal and Reflective Paper**

Course Policies

Aggie Honor Code

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” The Aggie Honor Code is important to all Aggies, and this includes plagiarizing anyone else’s work. For more information on the Honor Council Rules and Procedures, please consult

<http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>

Learning Support Needs

“The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Room 126 of the Koldus Building or call 845-1637.”

Class Attendance and Participation

ALED 340 is a dynamic class where your leadership experiences provide an important context for classroom and lab discussions. For you to be successful in this class, you must attend class and remain active in class. Attendance will be required. **You will receive 2 points for each class day that you attend. One point will be given for your presence in the class, and the other point will be given for your actual participation in the class. These should be “free” points and should, ultimately, enhance your grade. I will give you one, and only one, “free” day.** Attendance will constitute 30 points of your total 350 points in the class.

Missed Exams or Assignments

Students will have three week days to turn in late assignments and will be penalized 10% for each day late. **ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER THREE WEEK DAYS.** If a student is unable to take an exam, prior arrangements must be made with the instructor.

A Leader Defined

A leader must know where he has been, where he is now, and where he wants to go. For this assignment, you are to answer each question to the best of your ability. Look within yourself.

This exercise will also help the instructors learn something about each and every one of you. If you successfully answer each question with sincere thought, you will receive 10 points.

1. Name
2. Age
3. Hometown
4. Major
5. Why are you enrolled in ALED 340: Professional Leadership Development?
What do you want to gain from this course?
6. Employment Experiences
 - a. Previous
 - b. Current
 - c. Future
7. Hobbies
8. Leadership Experiences
 - a. Previous
 - b. Current
 - c. Future
9. Leadership situation in which you can practice what you learn this semester
10. Any other interesting information you want to share

ALED 340 LEADERSHIP VISION

SITUATION: Leaders are confronted with building a vision for an organization. To create a vision, leaders must first articulate their own professional leadership vision. Then, their professional vision and philosophy evolves into a sense of the organization's shared vision. Finally, the leader compares the shared vision with the current realities of the organization. You have studied many historical and contemporary leadership theories and models in ALED 340 with the objective of arriving at a deeper understanding of the professional leadership process. This assignment moves the course material you have learned into a practical and action-oriented leadership vision and philosophy.

ASSIGNMENT: This assignment is the first step in creating a professional leadership vision and philosophy. Your task is to articulate your leadership vision and philosophy by addressing the following categorical questions. By addressing these categories, you will create a leadership vision that identifies your leadership approach in a professional situation.

Create your professional leadership philosophy by answering these questions:

1. What is your vision statement (from lecture)?
2. What is the environment of your ideal profession? (will you work in an urban setting, rural setting, high-rise building, small warehouse, school, etc.)
3. How and why do you interact with your followers on a day-to-day basis? (email, open door-policy, scheduled meetings, etc.?)
4. What is your relationship with followers? (Theory X/Y, etc.?)
5. What type of power base do you have?
6. How do you motivate followers?
7. What is your leadership style?
8. What is your ethical/personal value system that will orient your decisions?
9. What is your ultimate purpose for leading others?

*** BE SURE TO EXPLAIN THE WHAT & WHY OF YOUR LEADERSHIP VISION. ***

	Possible	Awarded
	Comments	
9 categories addressed	20 points	_____
Depth, degree of thought	20 points	_____
Writing Effectiveness	10 points	_____
TOTAL	50 points	_____

TURN IN THIS SHEET AS YOUR COVER SHEET

Rubric for the Evaluation of Reflective Papers

SITUATION: Reflection is an important tool in the college classroom and can help students make the connection between theory and practice; therefore, the purpose of the reflective journals in Professional Leadership Development is to help you take what was learned in the classroom and apply it to your daily life (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). More specifically, as defined by Webster and Hoover (2006), the “reflection process transforms the experience for the learner” (p. 94), and journaling allows students to determine what is important to them and encourages teachers to expand upon these important concepts (Francis, 1995).

Chickering and Reisser (1993) believe “learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much by just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, [and] apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves” (pp. 374-375). Hopefully, through the incorporation of learner-centered teaching practices with an emphasis on reflective writing, you will internalize the concepts presented in the classroom. Thus, you will make the concepts your own and learn them for life.

ASSIGNMENT: You will be required to keep a reflective journal in this course. Following each day of classroom instruction, you are required to answer the following questions: (1) What did I learn today?, (2) What major new insights came out of the class for you?, and (3) How can the information learned in the classroom be applied to your daily life?

Upon completion of the course, you will be required to prepare a reflective paper, which will serve as a comprehensive reflection of the course. You will be required to incorporate all the same elements as in your reflective journals. Additionally, you will answer the question, “How has the act of reflecting made the learning process more meaningful to you?”

GRADING CRITERIA:

	Possible	Awarded	Comments
Depth of thought (making the connection)	17		
Writing Effectiveness (grammar, punctuation, etc.)	17		
TOTAL	34		

TURN IN THIS SHEET AS YOUR COVER SHEET

Rubric for the Evaluation of Reflective Journals

1 = Dependent 2 = Limited 3 = Adequate 4 = Competent 5 = Proficient and 6 = Superior

Criteria	Rating	Comments
Responses are complete.		
Responses extend beyond description and report to interpret, analyze, connect.		
Responses demonstrate close listening and deep reading.		
Responses link personal experience and other resources with the course material.		
Responses demonstrate ability to follow an idea.		
Responses reflect on significant issues and concerns.		
Responses consider various perspectives and viewpoints.		
Questions reveal insightful, perceptive reading/listening.		
Responses demonstrate ability to compare and evaluate.		
Responses build on various entries.		
Responses show growth in insight, appreciation of issue complexity, understanding of patterns.		

Source: Fenwick, T. J., & Parsons, J. (2000). *The art of evaluation*. Toronto, Canada: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.

LEARNING COMMUNITY TEACHING Evaluation Form

ASSIGNMENT: Conduct an activity that enhances the following leadership concepts:

- ☐ Situational Approach
- ☐ Contingency Theory
- ☐ LMX Theory
- ☐ Transformational Leadership
- ☐ Team Leadership

For this assignment, you, and the other members within your learning community, will be required to:

- ☐ Thoroughly describe the activity to be conducted in class.
- ☐ Conduct the activity.
- ☐ What key points are you hoping that the students will retain from the activity?
- ☐ What have you learned through the development of this activity? Have you grown in your understanding of leadership theory and practice?

Your learning community will be graded on the following rubric.

Rating Definitions

Excellent—only slight room for improvement

Acceptable—okay, but some room for improvement

Fair—marginally acceptable

Inadequate—did not meet criteria

	Excellent 5	Good 4	Fair 3	Inadequate 2	Comments
Provides a good introduction/overview					
Allows sufficient class participation					
Shows evidence of careful preparation					
Displays competence in knowledge of the topic					
Provides a good summary or conclusion					
TOTAL					

Leader and Follower Interview and Paper

SITUATION: Leadership is an awesome process involving both leaders and followers, where the leader is not more important than the follower. Leadership requires both leaders and followers to effectively reach the desired goals. Northouse (2007) believes “leaders are not above followers or better than followers...They are in the leadership relationship together—two sides of the same coin” (p. 4). At the same time, leaders might view the leadership process differently than the followers.

ASSIGNMENT: For this assignment, you are to interview a leader and a follower within the same organization to determine the different perspectives they might have regarding the leadership process. You will develop 10 questions that you will ask the leader. You will then ask the same 10 questions to the follower. In this case, you may be the follower or the leader, but you may not be both. When turning in this assignment, you will type up the ten questions, followed by the leader’s answers and the follower’s answers. Lastly, you will write a reflection paper, where you will discuss the differences and similarities within the leader and follower’s answers.

	Possible	Awarded	Comments
Interview	20 points	_____	
Reflection Paper	20 points	_____	
Discussion of Leadership Concepts	10 points	_____	
Writing Effectiveness	10 points	_____	
TOTAL	60 points	_____	

TURN IN THIS SHEET AS YOUR COVER SHEET

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

THE EFFECTS OF CRITICAL REFLECTION ON DEEP-LEVEL PROCESSING OF AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP STUDENTS

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying the relationship between reflective writing and students' approaches to learning. The purpose of this study is to assess the deep learning constructs of agricultural leadership education students. You were selected to be a possible participant because of your enrollment in ALED 340: Professional Leadership Development.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F) pre-intervention (the first day of the class) and post-intervention (the last day of the class), with the intervention being reflective writing. Regardless of your consent to participate in this study and as a component of the requirements for the successful completion of ALED 340: Professional Leadership Development, you will be required to keep a reflective journal. Following each day of classroom instruction, you will be asked to write in your reflective journal. Upon completion of the course, you will be asked to prepare a reflective paper, which will serve as a comprehensive reflection of the course. The study will last a total of five weeks. During the first day of week one, you will be asked to complete the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire, which will take approximately 20 minutes. Also, during week one, you will be asked to write in your reflective journals three times. During week two, you will be asked to write in your reflective journals four times. During week's three and four, you will be asked to write in your reflective journals three times. During week five, you will be asked to write in your reflective journals two times and prepare your comprehensive reflection of the course. During the last day of week five, you will be asked again to complete the revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire, which will take approximately 20 minutes.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the benefit to society is the improvement of teaching practices by college instructors. If this study validates the importance of reflective writing in the college classroom, instructors will see the benefits of utilizing it within

their college classrooms. Thus, teaching practices will be improved, whereby improving student learning.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential, and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Copie Moore and Dr. Barry Boyd will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Copie Moore, 979.845.2594 or 903.576.4861, croberts@aged.tamu.edu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

APPENDIX F

REVISED STUDY PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE (R-SPQ-2F)

This questionnaire has a number of questions about your attitudes towards your studies and your usual way of studying.

There is no *right* way of studying. It depends on what suits your own style and the course you are studying. It is accordingly important that you answer each question as honestly as you can. If you think your answer to a question would depend on the subject being studied, give the answer that would apply to the subject(s) most important to you.

Please fill in the appropriate letter alongside the question number on the answer sheet. The letters stand for the following responses:

- A—this item is *never* or *only rarely* true of me**
- B—this item is *sometimes* true of me**
- C—this item is true of me about *half the time***
- D—this item is *frequently* true of me**
- E—this item is *always* or *almost always* true of me**

Please choose the *one* most appropriate response to each question. Place the letter alongside the question number that best fits your immediate reaction. Do not spend a long time on each item. Your first reaction is probably the best one. Please answer each item.

Do not worry about projecting a good image. Your answers are CONFIDENTIAL.

Thank you for your cooperation.

-
1. I find that at times studying gives me a feeling of deep personal satisfaction.
 2. I find that I have to do enough work on a topic so that I can form my own conclusions before I am satisfied.
 3. My aim is to pass the course while doing as little work as possible.
 4. I only study seriously what's given out in class or in the course outlines.
 5. I feel that virtually any topic can be highly interesting once I get into it.
 6. I find most new topics interesting and often spend extra time trying to obtain more information about them.
 7. I do not find my course very interesting so I keep my work to the minimum.

8. I learn some things by rote, going over and over them until I know them by heart even if I do not understand them.
9. I find that studying academic topics can at times be as exciting as a good novel or movie.
10. I test myself on important topics until I understand them completely.
11. I find I can get by in most assessments by memorizing key sections rather than trying to understand them.
12. I generally restrict my study to what is specifically set as I think it is unnecessary to do anything extra.
13. I work hard at my studies because I find the material interesting.
14. I spend a lot of my free time finding out more about interesting topics which have been discussed in different classes.
15. I find it is not helpful to study topics in depth. It confuses and wastes time, when all you need is a passing acquaintance with the topics.
16. I believe that lecturers should not expect students to spend significant amounts of time studying material everyone knows will not be examined.
17. I come to most classes with questions in mind that I want answering.
18. I make a point of looking at most of the suggested readings that go with the lectures.
19. I see no point in learning material which is not likely to be on the examination.
20. I find the best way to pass examinations is to try to remember answers to likely questions.

Source: Biggs, J., Kember, D., & Leung, D. Y. P. (2001). The revised two-factor Study

Process Questionnaire: R-SPQ-2F. *British Journal of Educational*

Psychology, 71, 133-149.

APPENDIX G**REVISED STUDY PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE (R-SPQ-2F)
ANSWER SHEET**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Your answers are CONFIDENTIAL and INDPENDENT of your grade

APPENDIX H
PEER DEBRIEFING OF THE DATA COLLECTED
JULY 14, 2008

On July 14, 2008, Dr. Kim Dooley and I met to examine the data collected from the students' reflective journals and papers. Prior to the meeting, I performed a content analysis of the students' reflective journals and papers and discovered four themes. The four themes were as follows: the importance of experiential learning as a vital component of the learning process, the ability to connect leadership theory with practice, indicators of students taking a deep approach to learning, and indicators of students critically reflecting. Dr. Dooley has some very insightful suggestions to enhance the study, where the results of the study were more meaningful and would make a bigger contribution to new knowledge.

To begin with, Dr. Dooley suggested that I should describe the context of the study at the beginning of Chapter IV. Generalizability, or the extent to which the findings of this research study may be applied to other situations (Merriam, 1998), is a moot point in qualitative research; however, transferability is not (Patton, 2002). Guba and Lincoln said (as cited in Patton, 2002), "The degree of transferability is a direct function of the similarity between two contexts, what we shall call 'fittingness'" (p. 584). If I am to describe the complete context of my study, other researchers and other agricultural leadership educators may transfer my ideas into their own study or even into their own classroom. These researchers and educators will know and understand the context which surrounded my study to determine if their context fits.

Secondly, Dr. Dooley and I discussed the purpose of my study and my research questions. The original purpose of my study and my research questions were as follows:

The purpose of this study was to assess the deep learning constructs of agricultural leadership education students. The overarching research question of the study was: What are the effects of reflective writing on students' approaches to learning in an agricultural leadership education course?

More specifically, the study investigated the following research questions:

Question 1: As a result of a student-centered leadership education course with an emphasis on reflective writing, are the students utilizing a deep or surface approach to learning?

Question 2: What are the characteristics of a deep approach to learning as evidenced by the students' reflective writing?

In regards to the research questions, we decided to delete Question 1 (and ultimately the quantitative portion of this study), reworded Question 2, and added three more questions.

The revised purpose of the study and the research questions were as follows:

The purpose of the study was to assess upper-level undergraduate students on their approaches to learning and the level of their critical reflection in an agricultural leadership course with an emphasis on experiential learning and reflective writing.

More specifically, the student investigated the following research questions:

Question 1: What were the indicators of a deep approach to learning as evidenced by the students' reflective writing?

Question 2: What were the indicators of critical reflection as evidenced by the students' reflective writing?

Question 3: What were the teaching strategies that promoted deep learning and critical reflection?

Question 4: What was the influence of gender, experience, and major on deep learning and critical reflection?

From the content analysis of the reflective journals and papers, the study now produced four themes. The first theme was indicators of a deep approach to learning. Within this theme, there were four subthemes, which constituted key words from the definition of student approaches to learning (SAL). The four subthemes were as follows: understanding, meaningful, internalizing, and remembering. The second theme was indicators of critical reflection. Within this theme, there were two subthemes: recognizing mistakes from the past and making changes for the future and becoming aware of self. The third theme was teaching strategies that promoted deep learning and critical reflection. Within this theme, there were four subthemes: discussion, activities, team work and the importance of class interaction, and reflective writing. The fourth and final theme was the influence of gender, experience, and major on deep learning and critical reflection.

APPENDIX I

PARTICIPATION CODES

1MOE
2MOA
3MYE
4MYE
5FYA
6MYE
7FYE
8FYE
9MYA
10MYE
11MOA
12MYA
13FYA
14MOA
15MOA
16FYA
17FYE
18FYE
19FOE
20MYA
21FYE
22FOE
23MYA
24FYA
25FYA
26MYE
27FOA
28FYE
29FOA
30FYE
31FYE
32MYE
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34FYA
35MYE
36FYE
37FOE
38FYE
39MYE
40FOA

41FYA
42MOE
43FYE
44FYE
45FYE
46MYA
47FOE
48MYA
49FYA
50MYE
51FYA
52MYA
53FYE
54FYA
55MYA
56FYE
57FYE
58MYE
59MYE
60FYE
61MYE
62MYA
63FYE
64FOE
65MOE
66FOA

APPENDIX J

THEMES PRODUCED FROM THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENTS' REFLECTIVE JOURNALS AND PAPERS

Students' Perceptions of Experiential Learning

- 23MYA—I enjoyed the course because it was not strictly a lecture based class. I felt the assignments, activities, and the discussions has benefited towards my learning style.
- 26MYE—Another aspect of this class that I truly enjoyed was the activities that we did in class. I think that something like leadership is hard to sit and lecture on... The activities in class were very effective in reinforcing the theories that we talked about in class and helped to show us in a way that was tangible and easy to see instead of just words and slides.
- 14MOA—The use of class activities during the course of teaching the various styles was a good way to reinforce the traits of each leadership style, model, or theory. Without the activities, the students have only book knowledge and no practical experience. I know this experience is hard to obtain and anything that can be done in the classroom to broaden their experiences will be valuable. Although they consider some of the exercises silly and pointless, one day they will appreciate the class, especially when they are faced with difficult situation involving leadership. They may not actively think about the class and a specific leadership style, but the answer to their problem will be in their subconscious.
- 27FOA—I learned something from them... (activities)
- 21FYE—I really felt like I was part of the class and not just another student sitting in a desk. I was involved...
- 43FYE---...something that I have gotten out of this class that cannot be learned from the book...it comes from reflection, interaction, and an open atmosphere...
- 13FYA—I loved how we really got to know our groups and interact with them on a daily basis. This is an important part of learning that we do not experience in many class here at Texas A&M Univerity. It was different, eye opening, thought provoking, and fun.
- 18FYE—We came to this class as strangers, but we will leave as friends.
- 43FYE—I have taken smaller courses here at A&M, but rarely is the atmosphere so open and welcoming that I feel comfortable talking out loud. In learning leadership skills, I think we also found an opportunity to step up to the plate and bring our ideas forward.
- 47FOE—teaching the activity was the best day of class for me. A teacher must thoroughly understand the material he or she is teaching. I really understand the Contingency Theory!! I was an active participant in the learning process.

- 16FYA—Today, we were responsible for the activity in conjunction with team leadership. We did an activity about Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning. Guess what? This is so true. Our team went through these stages getting ready for teaching our activity. We first had to get to know each other (form). We secondly had to talk and sometimes argue about which idea was best (storm). We then decided on which idea was best (norm). We did the activity (perform). Finally, after we presented our activity, we talked as a group about what went good and what went bad and adjourned. Wow!
- 22FOE—I believe that [journaling] will help me to really learn and not just learn what is needed for the test on order to pass the class. Since the class had less stress on making THE grade for different assignments, I felt more comfortable just letting myself learn what was being taught...
- 2MOA—I think having discussions in class daily helped me personally retain the information that Copie was trying to relay to us. The way that she was able to produce more clear thoughts through all of the technical jargon, which in the end really helped me to understand the material in a better way.
- 44FYE—This journal has helped me really absorb leadership techniques and styles, instead of just memorizing them to merely pass the exams.
- 2MOA—I think having discussions in class daily really helped me personally to retain the information that Copie was trying to relay to us.
- 22FOE—For me, journaling served as a filing cabinet for the things I learned each day.
- 8FYE—I feel like keeping a daily journal has made me remember a lot more information about leadership, than had I not kept one.
- 30FYE—We started off the class with the two questions we were left with from the day before. Do you think leaders are born or made? Can a person learn leadership? Personally, I think leaders are born. Everyone is born with certain personality traits....For example, my sister was not born a leader. She preferred to be a follower....Recently, she was offered a management position at her job for being such a hard worker. She went to many leadership seminars and classes, but when she was placed into the leadership position, she wasn't able to handle it. Yes, she was an excellent worker, but definitely not a leader.
- 54FYA—The most beneficial real life assignment for me would have to have been the vision paper. It helped me realize what guides my life and the leader I am and want to become.
- 63FYE—Keeping a journal throughout the summer semester definitely helped me memorize information; however, applying the concepts learned in class to real-life situations helped me to grasp the information in a way that was meaningful.
- 65MOE—...style of teaching very rewarding for the student and the teacher.
- 2MOA—In class today, we had a pretty in depth and heated discussion on the subject of ethics. While I do sympathize with the girl that said she was a rape victim, I think she was incorrect for scolding her friend who was a defense attorney. I think when you are a public servant whether it be an ER doctor, or a firefighter, sometimes when you are under oath to serve the public you have certain things you may or may

not want to do, inspite of what other people say. A firefighter still must put out a fire at a house, even if that house was being used exclusively to sell dangerous drugs. A doctor still must operate on a gang member who has been shot by police, even if that gang member may have killed innocent bystanders earlier in a robbery. I think that when you are a public servant you must set aside your own personal beliefs and opinions, and do the job you were paid to do, even if that means going against your own thoughts.

- 26FYE—I think that people need to realize that we are all different and that is doesn't make us wrong it just means we need to make sure that we appreciate what other people believe and to respect them and their thoughts.
- 6MYE—America as a whole is separated into classes. There is the high class, the middle class, and the low class. When we discussed the views of each in the class it was discovered that we all believed many different things. Every person agreed that the rich get richer, but the confrontation came when we started to talk about the middle class and especially the low class. Some people believe that if you try hard enough, anyone can do anything. I personally believe that is ignorant. There are so many obstacles that face the lower class that it makes it virtually impossible for them to move to middle much less high class. It is possible for a few to make it, but...
- 18MYE—I'm somewhat amazed at how many of my fellow classmates actually believe that circumstances in life can cause a person to fail. I personally like what one girl said...I come from a small town...no one went to college...I was poor...I didn't wait for an invitation to make something of myself. She's gonna make a great leader inspiring others to remove all excuses.
- 6MYE—As a class, we were all given balloons and told to make a balloon castle, and then told we were going to combine them. Each group looked at this as an individual group task and not one group task. Every group made their own and when we tried to collaborate them it wasn't successful. This can very easily relate to real life. If everybody is in it just for themselves, then the outcome isn't going to be very successful. ...individuals will not mind sacrificing a little and over all the outcome will be much greater...
- 27FOA—Today, we did a group activity to show that when a leader favors one person or one group that the person or group that is not favored can never get ahead. I never realized that when favoritism is taking place who is not being favored can never get ahead because they will never receive the information. Information is power.
- 12MYA—Today, we watched a movie clip of "Remember the Titans". The clip was about how leadership can change. There are everyday situations at which we will have to adapt ourselves and use different styles of leadership. One day, we can be directing school children and the next day we can be teaching a workshop on how to become successful. Leadership changes based on a situation and can help a group achieve its goal.
- 13FOA—We can choose whether we want to be in the in-group or in the out-group. Our actions and words speak very loud. The students in *Dangerous Minds* wanted to be in the out-group. They did everything in their power to make sure they did only

what was required of themselves and nothing else. The teacher worked very hard to bring each and every student to the in-group. She succeeded!

- 9MYA—My reflection of this entire class makes me think of so much life stores that tie into much of what I have learned. Keeping the journal has tremendously helped with understanding the information covered, especially since we learned all this in four weeks.
- 37FOE—At the beginning of this class, we were asked if we thought leaders were born or made. At the time, I didn't really know how to answer that. Now, I am confident in saying that I don't think someone has to be born a leader to lead. If it is in his or her cards to be a leader, I feel like the person will accomplish things in life that will build his or her character, as well as their leadership qualities. It was brought to my attention recently, during a Bible study lesson, that King David is a perfect example of this. He was not born into a leadership position, but he did one day become a great leader. God put him through many trials that built his character and taught him the skills that he needed to lead his people.
- 38FYE—Personally, I believe that a leader is born and he is made. While there are certain characteristics that I do not think can be learned—for example, charisma—there are some aspects to effective leadership that can be developed—for instance, social skills. I think that there are some people who are natural-born leaders, but I also believe that in order to reach their complete potential, they should develop their skills as best as they can.
- 53FYE—Diversity can be between anything and anyone. It is how you deal with diversity that makes you really understand it and cope with it. We played this activity in class today that split us up into three groups. Each group was different than the other in forms of money, colors, towns, etc. We were diverse from one another. We had to learn how to manipulate our situation to the best of our ability. We had to work with one another in our specific 'town' as well as work with people outside of our 'town'. This taught us that in real life we are not always going to be surrounded by people like us, or people that want to be surrounded by. We have to learn to deal with real people in a not so perfect setting. We have to also learn how to make do with what we have and learn to use it to the best of our ability...just as we learned in the activity today.
- 40FOA—One of my favorite projects was the "Leader Follower Interviews." At first, I really disliked the project. One of my participants had answered my questions wrong. I quickly used my creativity to find a way to resolve the problem. I realized that this project was a great way for me to assess my leadership skills and my ability to work as a successful consultant. I ended up interviewing three people and did a self-assessment. I had a leader and a follower assess my leadership skills. Then, I had another follower assess the leadership skills of the other leader. The results came back great. I do show good leadership skills. I also realized that the leader I am working with is capable of being a strong leader. She could easily see my leadership skills as others saw them. She is very intelligent and able to understand the concepts. She just needs some motivation and a confidence boost. I am very confident that I can accomplish this. I plan to interview all of the followers soon to continue to help

the leader. From this project, I learned that I am a great coach, team leader, strong motivator, provide lots of guidance and support, and I am able to relate well with others.

- 19FOE—The Leader and Follower Interview and Paper was probably one of the most challenging activities we did in this class. I chose to interview my mom as the leader and myself as the follower. I don't think ever in my 23 years of being alive, have me and my mom agreed...After doing the summary paper at the end, it became clear to me that we do actually agree on some things and that maybe we should reevaluate our relationship as mother and daughter.
- 50MYE—The case study made the path-goal theory come alive for me. I saw how the path-goal theory worked.
- 49FYA—Because of the case study, I now understand the contingency theory. I don't like it, but I understand it.
- 11MOA—This summer I had hoped that our journals would help me to find some deeper meaning in the subjects we had discussed in classes. However, my journal really only served as a reiteration of the subjects we had discussed and did little to help me think deeper about the topics.

Trying to find an applicable example of how the lessons we covered in class applied to my life became more of a chore than a thought provoking exploration. Having been out of school for the last five years as an enlisted Marine, I have had a veritable cornucopia of experiences. Still, it was next to impossible to conjure up a real world example for every subject we covered in class. Don't get me wrong, I have enjoyed this course thoroughly and I have thought numerous times of how the information we discussed would be useful, but I don't think I could name those events off hand if I had to. Because of this lack of recollection, the journal was just one more thing I had to do for a check in the box. I think if this class was the only one I had or I had nothing else to do I might think deeper about the things we talked about in class but who has that kind of time?

Indicators of a Deep Approach to Learning

D1—Search for understanding

- 2MOA—I think, for myself personally, I would respect a leader more if they had worked their way up the corporate ladder through hard work and innovation (referent power), rather than just being handed a position...I think it is also paramount that a leader has the trust and respect of all his employees because if the employees do not trust it can become cancer in the company.
- 8FYE—Today, we learned about Theory X/Y. I realized that sometimes I am Theory X and sometimes I am Theory Y, which is a good thing. You have to know in what situation which one is better and adapt to it. In many ways, being a leader involves Theory X and Y, but people give Theory X a bad connotation. As I am searching for my job right now, I want to be able to tell my future employers that I have the skills of both Theory X and Theory Y.
- 12MYA—I understand the processes that deal with leadership.

- 13FYA—I feel like I understand leadership on a deeper level since I was taking notes, writing a daily journal, [and] then performing the many different activities that we did daily in class.
- 16FYA—...learning tool to help me in understanding all different leadership concepts... I searched for understanding by putting myself in the shoes of the leaders and the followers. This understanding allowed me to realize that each individual is completely different, and I believe that is what truly makes our society unique.
- 18FYE—At the beginning of this semester, I underestimated leadership styles that differed from my own. Luckily, this class offered many opportunities to observe different leadership styles in action. Each class exercise produced a need for a different type of leader.
- 37FOE—It was one thing for me to have an idea of these concepts, but it is a whole other thing to have a real understanding of them and know how to incorporate them into my life.
- 39MYE—Today, we discussed the importance of ethics, and the first thing that came to my mind was the leader and follower interview and paper. I was well aware of the due date, but I decided to wait until the last minute to begin the paper. On the day before the paper was due, I was faced with an ethical dilemma. I wasn't sure who to interview at the time, so I debated the thought of making up an interview. Thankfully, one of my co-chairs called me and it clicked that I could just use people involved in Fish Camp. I'm glad I ultimately made the correct decision because if not, I would have risked my grade and would have had guilty conscience the whole time. Also, your actions speak for who you are as a person, especially in the real world.
- 48MYA—I feel that I have been able to pick out the leadership theories and behaviors that pertain to me as well as implement them into my life so that I get a full understanding of what they are and how they work.
- 50MYE—My favorite theory was Transformational Leadership. I am really big on the whole spiritual quest for enlightenment, and the main practice is to achieve transformation. The key difference I see between transformational leadership (TL) and transformational spirituality (TS) is that the TL targets transformation of the follower, and TS targets transformation within you. I think TL is so interesting because you aren't just influencing someone, you are helping them evolve.
- 61MYE—Because of reflective writing, I had a better understanding of the leadership concepts. By applying it to my everyday life, I had to break down the information and try to focus on it one aspect at a time. By doing this, I noticed that any information that was not clear at the time, cleared up once I applied it to my everyday life or some situation that I thought about. I believe that if this process was done on more of a daily basis with everyone we could truly see what we have accomplished over our life.
- 62MYA—The act of reflecting daily gave me an opportunity to make the concepts my own and therefore they were not just memorized, but learned forever... This assignment kept me concentrating on the question, "Why this matters to me?" I

always saw the bottom line of each leadership concepts, increasing my understanding of the material.

D2—Interest as driver for approach to study/learning

- 14MOA—Coming back to school has been an interesting experience and one I would not trade. My interest in learning is increasing daily, and I want to really learn the leadership concepts.
- 22FOE—Keeping a journal raised my interest level for this course. I am considering keeping a journal for my life, so that I can build on what I learn each day and become a better person. I want to approach my life with enthusiasm, learning from my mistakes.
- 26MYE—This class has been very interesting to me. The plans I have for my future are very important to me and this class has helped me to see how, as a leader, I should try to start developing myself so as to be most effective.
- 30FYE—I learned a lot from this class and ENJOYED it! I hope we will all become better leaders thanks to this informative class. I liked the way we had to get involved in the class discussions and group exercises. I believed this involvement helped with clarifying any questions we had about the subject. I had a blast, and I will use my knowledge, because I will remember most of everything I learned, in my future plans!
- 36FYE—After class, I pondered the concepts more and see if there was anything that I might wanted to add, as opposed to just forgetting, or only remembering the concepts for the test.
- 36FYE—I enjoyed keeping the journal and the opportunities it afforded me in reviewing what I learned in class and it gave me a chance to really think about how leadership has and is affecting me life.
- 39MYE--...helped me retain information, sparked my interest in the course, and prepared me for the future. It was almost a psyche of the mind...I looked forward to observing the events happening around me, in hopes of finding something to write about in my journal. Because of my interest in the reflective journal, I was a better student.
- 46MYA—I am thoroughly motivated with what I have learned. It gives me a sense of confidence and knowledge that I have never had before...I can now go on to be a better role model for my son, friends, and family to follow.
- 51FYA—Because of the class structure of ALED 340, I was interested and motivated to learn the leadership concepts for more than the test. I learned them for life!
- 56FYE—I have truly benefited and enjoyed ALED 340! I appreciate our instructor for her insight and everyone in my class for their intelligence. Leaving this course, I can take a lot of knowledge with me that will help me and everyone around me.
- 59MYE—This class served as a motivator to change some of the skills I have as a student in hopes of becoming a concerned learner instead of one who cares only about what is on the test.

D3—Attempts to link knowledge/theory to experience, real world situations

- 2MOA—...knowledge that is actually applicable and useful in the real world.
- 9MYA—I absolutely have taken so much information out of this class that will help me 1, 5, 10, [and] 30 years down the road.
- 10MYE—I would go home and watch my dad at the shop and I would see the different thing[s] that we did in class. This was cool to me because I seen it in everyday terms.
- 24FYA—This course made some situations that happened at my previous job make more sense. It also put a label more or less on certain circumstances. ...also, this course will help me in the future...
- 27FOA—We discussed servant leadership today. One of the best supervisors that I have ever had used this type of leadership. I worked harder for him than I have ever worked for any other supervisor because I did not want him to have to set aside time to help me. I would work had to get my job finished so that I could help him with his. I would help him with his job because I knew he would do the same for me. If I am ever in a leadership position, I hope to use this style of leadership. I think for the most part it is good as long as you do not let people take advantage of you.
- 6MYE—Take our class for example. I feel like the front two tables are more of the in-group because we always take part in discussing while the back two tables just listen. There is nothing wrong with either, it just shows the differences. If the teacher is asking a question, she is more than likely expecting the front two tables to talk (in my opinion).
- 39MYE—Today, I had a job interview that tested my abilities to cope with certain situations by adapting to different scenarios. Similarly to the path-goal theory, I explained my behavior of my approach would depend on the situation. I was given the example of having a coworker that didn't agree with my decision making. Obviously, a directive leadership behavior wouldn't be the appropriate one to choose, instead a more participate behavior is best in order to invite others into the planning and decision-making.
- 37FOE—It was one thing for me to have an idea of these concepts, but it is a whole other thing to have a real understanding of them and know how to incorporate them into my life.
- 14MOA—Another skill learned in ALED 340 was teamwork. All of our activities were group based, which will be invaluable in the workplace because working within teams is a reality in the current business environment. ...the ability to work well with others is not only applicable to business; these skills will be transferable to our personal lives...
- 8FYE—Knowing that the United States is a democratic type leadership, makes me want to vote more and have my voice heard. I live with four girls (there is 5 of us total), and it is "illegal" to have more than four non-related people living under the same roof together, which I don't think is fair. Now, the city is trying to make it that only 2 non-related people can live together in order to "cut down on parties." I am definitely going to vote against this bill, especially since I think that only allowing

two people to live together will increase parties! Also, many college students would not be able to afford that, while I also feel it isn't constitutional.

- 27FOA—One of the things that I learned during class was that there should not necessarily be a bad connotation with being in the out-group in a working environment. I always thought that a person should strive to be in the in-group, but this is not always possible. I have worked on campus for almost ten years now and I have experienced my turn in both the in-group and the out-group. In my current job, I would probably be considered to fit in the out-group because I take care of my job, but after I get off work I usually have to go take care of my homework. I have learned this is not bad, just necessary.
- 36FYE—My college career has followed the pattern of follower development. My first year here I didn't know what I was doing but I was determined to succeed. Then, the following two years I wasn't sure if I wanted to continue although I knew more what to do. Now, I am highly motivated to finish and know exactly what to do. In each of these stages, I would naturally seek out leaders that would match where I was and would be the most effective.

D4—Seeks connections between different elements of disciplinary knowledge/theory

- 18FYE—What does it cost to be a great leader? Winston Churchill believed all greatness bore the price of responsibility. Throughout this semester, those words began to bury themselves at the core of who I am. When we are placed, or stumble upon, a leadership position, we have the power to positively or negatively affect others. The influence of a great leader can be observed in even the most remedial positions.
- 22FOE—Today, we learned about the Leader-Member Exchange Theory. This model shows that the leader and the followers work together in a particular relationship. I would like to combine this theory with situational leadership. I believe the combination of both will increase the effectiveness of the leader and the followers in order to more likely achieve their goal.
- 25FYA—Personality depicts leadership. A high school coach and a kindergarten teacher are both leaders, but I am sure they both have different types of personalities, leadership styles, and most importantly, different types of followers.
- 33FYA—Effective leadership can come in so many different styles and forms. You have to match the leader to the follower to the situation or else problems can occur. I truly believe this is the leading factor in struggling businesses around the world. If everyone had this knowledge at their disposal and the ability to adapt to their surroundings, productivity everywhere would increase and turnover rates would plummet. I will analyze each situation carefully from here on out.
- 38FYE—Before entering this class, I would have defined leadership as a means of raising morale and motivating a group in a non-coercive manner to accomplish a goal. However, in reflection explain leadership as a 'process', as defined in the book, is more fitting. It is evident that building relationships with followers, which, like building any relationship, is time consuming and involves stages of progress—lending itself to be a 'process'. Also, leading in different situations requires different

styles, as is explained by the situational leadership theory. It only seems natural that the adaptation of style occurs in a 'process' under which the situation is analyzed and the appropriate style is determined and enacted. However, effective leadership involves a 'process' that delves far deeper. It is a 'process' a leader must undergo in constantly remaking himself to be the best that he can. I believe that the most effective leaders are those who lead by example. No person is without flaws, and, as a leader it is inevitable that those flaws will be exposed. When these flaws arise, and mistakes are made, an effective leader must accept responsibility for those mistakes and make the appropriate corrections. Furthermore, he must undergo a 'process' of change.

- 66FOE—This course has given me valuable insight and priceless tools that will assist me in becoming a better, more effective leader. With my understanding of the trait approach, I can recognize my future employee's leadership traits. By applying the situational leadership approach, I can be a better, more effective leader to those employees. In conclusion, the Tuckman's Model of Team Development will create a work atmosphere where all team members feel appreciated and welcomed. It is of most importance that I, as a future leader, maintain a reputation of excellence and continue to live my life with integrity.

D5—Explores subject beyond syllabus specifications
None

● Three Themes to Maximize Learning

Increased retention

- 49FYA—I did not forget the concepts as soon as I walked out the door...
- 59MYE—...able to remember not just for tests but for life.
- 50MYE—I believe the key difference between memory and reflection is getting something out of it. I could "re"-member what I wrote about leadership during the summer session, or I could try and get something out of those memories (reflection).
- 9MYA—I am happy to say I will remember all of this throughout the coming years.
- 19FOE—...students [to] make more of an effort to learn something daily.
- 22FOE—I feel that writing helped me to remember things I had enjoyed and learned from prior days and this helped me to study for the test because I made connections with each subject already and just needed to refresh.
- 25FYA—...help me remember the material longer...
- 35MYE—What used to be in the back of mind and I had to think about...are now like second nature for me.
- 52MYA—This way of learning forced you to think about what you were saying and put it on paper how it could be used. This has made the learning process easier for me I feel because when you visualize yourself doing something I think it makes it easier to actually get there and fulfill your dream.

Internalized (Self-Aware)

- 29FOA—I think journaling helped me to internalize what I learned in this class
- 29FOA—I don't like to write, but this did help even if some of my entries were short and sweet. It helped reinforce the concepts and applications better than the tests did. It is easy to use short term memory on tests, but this let me internalize and see my strengths and weaknesses as a leader. It allowed me to grow.
- 37FOE—This class has taught me a lot about myself. Who I am and why, who I want to be, and who I am capable of being.
- 37FOE—I became aware of my actions and wanted to work on my flaws...
- 46MYA—When the end of the day is near, I begin to look back at what I have done, achieved, or what I need to improve. I look at my reflective journal and notes from class and absorb as much as I can. This class has been a guiding light for me to follow while I was in the dark looking for answers.
- 14MOA—This class has been a valuable experience for my...personal growth.
- 19FOE—Having this class has taught me to evaluate every situation around me and to grow from them.
- 26MYE—The plans I have for my future are very important to me and this class has helped me to see how, as a leader, I should try to start developing myself so as to best be effective.
- 29FOA—...evaluating my successes and failures at leading people...
- 48MYA—I am not a leader by accomplishing my goal of graduating from college, but I am a leader for taking what I have learned in school and putting it to use in the real world.

Transforming

- 4MYE—I like to say that I believe in Theory Y and implement it, but if I examine the way I have interacted with my followers in the Corps in the past, I may be much more Theory X than I thought. However, at times this is appropriate. I need to make sure that I apply the correct attitude for each situation.
- 8FYE—I realized that I am a leader, an assigned leader, but I hope to become an emergent one. I want to strive to be an emergent leader and not an assigned. I want people to want me to be a leader and agree with my decisions.
- 8FYE—In class, we did a game about what color you are, and I chose the color green, meaning organized. It was right on key that I am not good at letting other people help when I am a leader because I think I can do it better, and that my way is right. In order to be a better leader, I need to allow myself to develop the leadership skills so I can overcome my selfishness and grow into a leader others want to work under. I want to strive to be the colors red, yellow, and blue, as well as green. They all have their positives and negatives, but I want to be more open to different people and their different leadership abilities.
- 13FYA—I must admit I have always been very set in my ways and not very open to change. After taking this class, I have a few things in mind I want to try.
- 18FYE—I am a very loud and outgoing person who tends to dictate tasks and can unintentionally overlook possible solutions proposed by others. Although my style

of leadership can be very helpful and effective in some situations, in others it has the opposite effect. Identifying what type of group I would be best suited to lead will enable me to capitalize on my strengths. Regardless of the cost of being a great leader, I plan to dedicate my life on learning to accept that responsibility.

- 14MOA—Change is the only constant the students will face in their careers, and the more adept they are to adapting to change, the more rewarding and fulfilling their jobs will be.
- 19FOE—This class was a great class for me. I'm probably the furthest from a leader than anyone I know. This class has taught me to stand out and have a voice.
- 26MYE—Another thing this class has taught me is that the [organization that I am involved with] is doing some things right and some things wrong...
- 29FOA—One area I realized I need to work on is finding the right way to motivate my followers and not to reach for coercion. My dad used coercion or punishment with me when I was younger and I think that is why I tend to default to it. Now, I can see that if I had tried a rewards based system, I would have had happier and more motivated followers in certain situations.
- 46MYA—My girlfriend likes how much I have learned about diversity and knows my mind is open now to be more creative in my approach to women...
- 52MYA—Before taking this class, I had my own views and opinions about what I thought leadership was and the true purpose of a positive functioning team. After taking this course, I learned the true meaning of how teams are developed, put together and ran and managed effectively.
- 66FOA—...my knowledge and perception of leadership has changed.

APPENDIX K

THE AUDIT TRAIL OF THE INDICATORS OF A DEEP

APPROACH TO LEARNING WITHIN THE STUDENTS’

REFLECTIVE WRITING

Student	Indicators
1MOE	D3
2MOA	D1, D2, D3, D4
3MYE	D3
4MYE	D1, D3
5FYA	D1, D3
6MYE	D1, D2, D3, D4
7FYE	D1, D2, D3
8FYE	D1, D3
9MYA	D1, D3
10MYE	D1, D3
11MOA	D1, D3, D4
12MYA	D1, D3
13FYA	D1, D3
14MOA	D1, D2, D3
15MOA	D3
16FYA	D1, D3
17FYE	D1, D3, D4
18FYE	D1, D3, D4
19FOE	D1, D3
20MYA	D1, D3, D4
21FYE	D1, D3
22FOE	D1, D2, D3, D4
23MYA	D1, D3
24FYA	D1, D3
25FYA	D1, D3, D4
26MYE	D1, D2, D3
27FOA	D1, D3
28FYE	D3
29FOA	D1, D3
30FYE	D1, D2, D3
31FYE	D3
32MYE	D1, D3, D4
33FYA	D1, D3, D4
34FYA	D1, D3
35MYE	D3

36FYE	D1, D2, D3, D4
37FOE	D1, D3
38FYE	D1, D3, D4
39MYE	D1, D2, D3, D4
40FOA	D1, D3, D4
41FYA	D1, D3
42MOE	D1, D3, D4
43FYE	D1, D3, D4
44FYE	D3
45FYE	D1, D3, D4
46MYA	D1, D2, D3
47FOA	D1, D2, D3
48MYA	D1, D3, D4
49FYA	D1, D3, D4
50MYE	D1, D2, D3, D4
51FYA	D1, D2, D3
52MYA	D1, D3
53FYE	D1, D3
54FYA	D1, D3, D4
55MYA	D1, D3
56FYE	D1, D2, D3
57FYE	D1, D2, D3
58MYE	D1, D3, D4
59MYE	D1, D2, D3
60FYE	D1, D3
61MYE	D1, D3
62FYA	D1, D3
63FYE	D1, D3
64FOE	D1, D2, D3
65MOE	D1, D3
66FOA	D1, D3, D4

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